



## Why Do Some People Empathize with Murderers? The Role of Neutralization Discourse in Romanticizing a Murder to the Public

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### Abstract

In a relatively small quiet city in Egypt, in a horrific incident devoid of humanity, Naira Ashraf, a student at Mansoura University, was stabbed several times mercilessly until she dropped dead in the daylight in front of hundreds. A safe city turned into a crime scene in the blink of an eye. This atrocious crime was an eye-opener to many psychological and sociological problems that nobody had ever noticed. The goal of the current study is to examine the criminal psychotic confessions of Mohammed Adel the killer of Naira Ashraf and analyze his behavior using neutralization discourse analysis. This study includes analyzing his confessions from a linguistic perspective. The confessions were based on his final testimony in court from a YouTube video uploaded by a journalist at Almasry-Alyoum newspaper's official channel. Neutralization discourse plays a key role in explaining why criminal conduct persists and grows in prevalence. The confessions contain a wide variety of neutralization discourse strategies. Therefore, this study presents an analysis that logically covers these strategies by using both a deductive and an inductive approach. The framework of Sykes and Matza (1957) is used to analyze the linguistic traits of criminal offenders. It was found that murderers were more prone than other criminals who commit crimes that do not involve murder to explain and justify their criminal behavior in causal terms, with a comparatively high amount of subordinating conjunctions, implying more cause-and-effect allegations. This framework of the analysis indicated that criminals were inclined to render the crime as an inevitable consequence of a plan (something that 'had' to be undertaken to reach a motive); their brutality is, therefore, more deliberate, and purpose-driven than that of other criminals.

**Keywords:** *Criminals' Language, Neutralizations Discourse Analysis, Romanticizing Killers, Labeling, Violence against Women.*

## **1- Introduction:**

*Why is it important to study the language of criminals?*

The examination of the language of criminals may throw insight into topics like mental disorders and apathy, which are useful for creating measures to prevent violent crimes. In addition to increased research being done on them, society has started to show more interest in studying criminal behavior.

An individual's personality is the culmination of all the characteristics that make him/her unique and reflects how he/she interacts with the world around him/her, including others and their attitudes. These characteristics can be understood through his feelings, behavior, deeds, and outer traits. His inclinations, needs, aspirations, skills, notions, and character qualities are normal, yet when one fails, the other does too. Some of these elements develop into disorders of personality and mental illnesses which push the perpetrator of a crime to break the law and violate social norms and values. This study discusses how mental illness could push people to seek retribution, hurt, and commit fraudulent activities (Baumeister, 1999). To comprehend the behavior and disorders of a psychopathic criminal, this study attempts to present a neutralization discourse analysis of Mohamed Adel's final confessions in court. According to Sykes and Matza's (1957) theory, neutralization linguistic strategies such as "the negation of accountability, negation of causing harm, negation of hurting a victim, condemning the victim, and appeal to higher loyalties" have an essential effect on an individual's choice to engage in criminal behavior. Discourse analysis tools were utilized to examine Adel's framing of his victim, his act of violence, and the underlying reason for the crime he committed using publicly published court confessions. The findings show that his language contains neutralization linguistic strategies, particularly how he framed his victim, the anguish he inflicted on her, and the factors that led to his actions represented in linguistic analysis.

## **2- Theoretical Background: Strategies of Neutralization**

Christensen (2010) described neutralization strategies, also known as rationalizations or justifications, as explanations for abnormal behavior.

Neutralization strategies are found to be in the problematic zone of being widely criticized yet being widely adopted (Eliason, et al., 2000). They are regarded as a crucial, if not the most essential explanation of abnormal behavior, including money laundering and theft (Hirschi, 1969). In the study of abnormal behavior, neutralization strategies have therefore come to be one of the most widely used terms (Copes, 2003). Among the first researchers to explore neutralization strategies were Sykes and Matza (1957). They put forth five main categories of neutralization tactics— The negation of accountability, the negation of causing harm, the negation of a victim, condemning the victim, and appealing to higher loyalties—to explain abnormal behavior. These five neutralization tactics, sometimes referred to as the “famous five,” are frequently employed in a variety of areas (Copley, 2014). Several additional novel strategies have also been discovered at the same time (Copley, 2014).

### *Neutralization Discourse*

Studies on forensics and delinquent behavior gave rise to neutralization discourse (Hirschi, 1969). Hirschi (1969) claims that neutralization is the main strategy used to rationalize crimes and outlines how white-collar criminal behavior is acquired. Criminals argue about executing wrongdoing by rendering it as palatable as part of a deliberate self-persuasion. In an examination of defalcators, Ben-Yehuda, (1985) observed that they used vocabularies of adjustment to explain away their illicit actions, such as saying they only borrowed the money. By using these words, defalcators were able to downplay the obvious discrepancy in their actions and accepted standards and regulations. Sykes and Matza (1957) wanted to understand how young criminals acquired neutralization strategies rather than using the expression “rationalization” to describe the rationale behind criminal behavior. They claim that criminals obtain skills so they can flout the regulations and standards they are customarily brought up to obey.

Neutralization discourse aims to clarify the dichotomy of criminals breaking the rules they have been brought up with yet feeling no remorse or regret. These criminals use language strategies to persuade themselves that it is okay in the present moment to act in a way that is often seen to be unethical to maintain their sense of self-worth and muzzle self-reproaching. While not completely rejected, rules are

temporarily put aside so that violators feel free to break them (Henry, 2007). As a result, self-illusion serves to reconcile their inappropriate behavior with the regret and disgrace that follow (Cohen, 2001). Since this behavior is justified both before and during the offense, abnormal conduct is accepted by the criminal (Sykes and Matza, 1957).

One crucial idea in Sykes and Matza's (1957) explanation of a criminal's choice of committing a murder is his capacity to justify or mitigate his violent conduct. When a perpetrator of a crime develops a rationale that acquits his actions and their repercussions, neutralization strategies take place (Christensen, 2010). The negation of accountability, negation of causing harm, negation of hurting a victim, condemning the victim, and appeal to higher loyalties are the five tactics of neutralization that are most specifically mentioned. Denial of responsibility typically happens when a criminal ascribes the cause of his actions to variables beyond his domination (such as teasing or provocation). When the victimization of the innocent is denied, like when, for example, a female's outfit is to blame for being verbally or sexually harassed, it is called "condemning the victim". Subsequently, condemnation of the condemners draws attention to the wrongdoings of those who forbid the actions and challenges the higher authorities that the preparator has higher moral standards than the laws that forbid his criminal conduct.

The current study thoroughly analyzes Adel's language considering these neutralization strategies. It is acknowledged that Adel's offense represents an extreme situation and is out of the ordinary. However, examining the prevalence of such strategies in circumstances as extreme as Adel's horrible crime can help demonstrate the applicability of Sykes and Matza's (1957) paradigm-defining ways of neutralization.

### **3- Methodology:**

A deductive and inductive approach was used for the analysis of the confessions to encompass the neutralization strategies that exist within an orderly framework and explain why some people sympathize with criminals from a linguistic perspective.

***a- The Deductive Approach:***

The analysis starts by deductively developing an initial framework that would contribute to logically connecting the types of neutralization strategies. The deductive approach involves beginning with a theory (Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralization theory), developing a hypothesis from that theory, and then collecting and analyzing data to test those hypotheses. Since the deductive approach is founded on the core of what neutralization is, the initial framework utilized is rational and comprehensive. Neutralizations of unacceptable conduct are tactics that serve to deny, either completely or partially, someone's accountability for the unacceptable conduct ("I am not the one to blame.") to reduce or eliminate guilt. Neutralizing or justifying is then achievable in two distinct forms: negating unacceptable conduct on one hand and claiming no accountability on the other. There is nothing wrong with negating inappropriate conduct, no entity can be pointed at as accountable if accountability is denied. Employing one of these two neutralization tactics indicates there is no (or just limited) accountability for the unacceptable conduct in question since there is aberrant conduct, but one is not accountable for it, or that one has accountability but for aberrant conduct. As a result, there are two primary types of unacceptable conduct justifications: negating aberrant conduct ("It is not aberrant.") and rejecting accountability ("I am not accountable for it.").

Two additional classifications can be added to each of these groups. One can refute unusual conduct by (I) falsifying what is true ("It is not true") or (II) negating the established order ("It is not crucial"). By altering the narrative of the circumstance, one might make it look as though the inappropriate conduct never occurred by making the broken standard cease to be applicable. By altering the standard so that it ceases to be applicable, they may further refute unacceptable conduct. Negating accountability can be divided into three categories: (III) condemning the current of events (outsider factors are to blame; "it is out of my control"); (IV) abdicating accountability, and (V) cowering behind oneself, whereby individuals blame internal, personal causes and forces while simultaneously absolving themselves ("It is an absence of self-control."). In considering that criminals may experiment with deviation (through evidence or standards) or

with accountability (through outside or inside variables), the five groups are both comprehensive and inclusive.

***b- The Inductive Approach:***

This approach involves beginning with a set of empirical observations, seeking patterns in those observations, and then theorizing about those patterns. It includes the part of the analysis that explains why some people would sympathize with criminals on a linguistic level. The confession of Mohamed Adel in court before his execution was the corpus to apply this approach (neutralization theory). Four categories out of five neutralization strategies were detected in the corpus. Then further definitions of the categories were attempted following the initial categories. Each compiled occurrence of neutralization strategies in the corpus could be linked to a particular model strategy. This means that the model of Sykes and Matza (1957) includes all neutralization strategies known till now, and these strategies will be followed as the methodology of analysis as shown in the next figure:



***Figure 1: The Neutralization Strategies by Sykes and Matza (1957)***

***c- Choosing the Corpus and Data Resources:***

Adel, an Egyptian criminal who admitted to killing a female victim, is the subject of the current study. To get Adel's final confession, I made a transcript of his confession in Arabic from the YouTube video, uploaded by a journalist at Almasry-Alyoum newspaper's official channel, then I translated it into English. Adel had already received a death sentence after being found guilty of slaughtering Naira (his victim). Adel was justifying murder due to circumstances out of his control. For the second part of the analysis concerning people's responses to the crime, some posts from official Facebook news pages, and some public personal profiles with hidden identities were included.

***d- The Research Stages***

The discourse of a criminal was of particular importance to this study. Based on (Christensen, 2010) literature that examines the "formation" of the language of criminals, the strategy of the analysis was similar. Simply, the goal is to examine every significant component of the formation of an infamous criminal and pinpoint the linguistic features he utilizes. Hence, discourse analysis is chosen to analyze Adel's final confession to pinpoint the neutralization tactics he used. The focus of the analysis was to examine his language and how he depicts his vision of objects including himself as a tool for him to justify his crime.

***e- Integrating Discourse Analysis***

The main objective of discourse analysis is the study of components of social interaction, (Gaventa, 2007). My approach was interpretative because I went for the levels of meaning that Adel's discourse revealed. According to Fowler, R. and B., Hodge (1979), the main goal of this analytical method is to [make] inferences by methodically and impartially recognizing specific characteristics of communication. Discourse analysis focuses primarily on the use of discourse techniques to deliver meaning. Speech, figurative language, rhetoric tactics, labels, and narratives are examples of discourse techniques. According to Lukes, (2005), discourse has three separate facets: the place the discourse is given. If the discourse is action-driven, and the way it is produced. Adel's discourse is set against a large framework in which he was convicted of a horrifying murder following a trial that gained

extraordinary media attention. This background is crucial to consider, particularly in light of prioritizing finding justification in his discourse. It is essential to take into account Adel's rhetoric as action-oriented towards normalizing an atrocious deed. Finally, regardless of his honesty in narrating the crime's details, Adel's discourse creates a version of himself, his crime, his victim, and society worthy of investigation.

As an initial phase, the approach was utilized to become acquainted with the two sources of data by making a transcript of the confessions and watching the video. Then, significant motifs were identified by employing the recurrence of words and phrases method. I was pursuing various patterns to appear by the discourse analysis methodology. My research techniques were not just focused on what was obvious in Adel's confession. I examined the words that were explicitly used. Still, much of my work was interpretive and concentrated on the profound significance of those phrases, particularly their justification or rationalization aspect. Since hidden meaning is defined as an "interpretative understanding of the metaphor beneath the tangible data" (Gaventa, 2007), my analytical technique was directed to reach this point.

The repetitiveness of patterns of typical discursive theme devices was explored. A frequent employing of specific imagery to disclaim accountability, for instance, would be regarded as a pattern of interest. As a result, Adel's use of rhetoric to modify or refute his argument was also emphasized.

The current research focuses on Adel's self-conception, actions, victim, and broader social context. More specifically, the linguistic and discourse strategies used are thoroughly examined. The underlying premise is that Adel's shift from a lover to a crime perpetrator, even in its ostensibly impartial and detailed form, is critical to his perception of blame attribution. This study explores how his language use fits into a justifying and rationalizing context. It will first examine Adel's narrative of his victim, then of his crime, and ultimately, it will assess the reasons behind it all as perceived by him to convey the primary issues logically and how society interacted with the crime.

## **4- Analysis**

### ***a- The Negation of Accountability:***

In his explanation of his crime, Adel seems to utilize the tactic of abdication of accountability to disavow any guilt that might be placed on him and lessen the stigma attached. Indicators that Adel employed the “negation of accountability” strategy, to alleviate the burden of guilt and lessen stigmatization, he attributed his misdeed to Naira’s family, her upbringing, and her mother in particular. Below are some examples from his confessions:

القاضي: هل انت ندمان يا محمد على قتلها؟

محمد: ندمان طبعا لأن مكنتش حابب ان الموضوع يوصل لكده بس لو جيت للحق المفروض أمها هي اللي تتسأل عليها. هي السبب.

Judge: Do you regret killing her, Muhammad?

Muhammad: Of course, I regret it because I didn’t want things to end up like this, but as a matter of fact, her mother should be the one to be asked about it. She is the reason.

This part of the confessions took place near the end of the trial. The proceedings of the confessions were full of justification strategies without showing any signs of regret. On the contrary, he was justifying murdering the victim as an inevitable result of her faults.

In the previous excerpt of confessions, he blamed the victim’s mother for being “the reason” for what happened to her daughter. In this excerpt, he blames the victim herself for being “the reason” for what happened to her:

القاضي: يعني الحاجات اللي في الباص دي ضايقتك؟

محمد: ضايقتني . لو أنا مقرر ولقيتها في حالها مبتعملش حاجة وأنا مقرر مية في المية إيه اللي هيخليني آجي جنب واحدة في حالها مبتعملش حاجة؟ لكن إنت, إنتِ السبب في كل ده . إنتِ اللي مدمرة حياتي . المفروض بقى أنا اللي أقعد اضحك وأنا اللي أقعد أتكلم وأنا اللي أقعد أعمل . معملتش الكلام ده كله وإنتِ اللي قاعده بتعلمي الكلام ده كله.

Judge: So, what happened on the bus bothered you?

Muhammad: She bothered me. If I made up my mind to harm her but found her minding her own business, I could not have done anything. Why should I harm a girl who is minding her own business? She was the reason for all this. She destroyed my life. I am the one who was supposed to be laughing and making fun of her, and I'm the one who was supposed to sit down and talk about her. I didn't do all this, and she was the one who did all this.

Then he continued to blame the victim's entire family for the crime (he) committed:

القاضي: عايز تقول حاجة تاني يا محمد.

محمد: عايز اقول مفيش حاجة تبرر اللي انا عملته لكن كل واحد بيعدي على فترة في حياته بيبقى غصب عنه لكن الحق ان أهلها هما المفروض يتسألوا عن الموضوع ده لأنهم هما السبب.

Judge: Do you want to say something else, Muhammad?

Muhammad: I want to say that there is no need to justify what I did, but every person goes through a period of his life that goes against his will. The truth is that her family members are supposed to be asked about this issue because they are the reason.

Again, Adel states many times that the main “cause” of killing a soul was out of his control, he blamed the victim once, then, her mother and her way of upbringing her daughter, and then he blamed the entire family for causing the harm to their daughter. Moreover, he turned the roleplaying by claiming that he has been victimized and exploited. By laying the blame on others, he is lessening his responsibility for his crime and implying that the community should be held accountable for allowing the girl to engage in a relationship with a guy.

#### ***b- The Negation of Causing Harm:***

The second strategy of neutralization discourse detected in the confessions is the (Negation of Causing Harm). English philosopher John Stuart Mill first put out the idea of “causing harm” which is a fundamental component of the political theory known as liberalism (Carlyle, 2004). The harm principle is intended to limit the

accessibility to crimes and limit governmental constraints on human freedom rather than to direct the activities of individuals (Surette, 2015). When an offender denies doing harm despite their actions being against the law (such as when a young person steals a car to use or for a joyride and then gives it back undamaged), they deny harm. The idea is frequently associated with the concept of “negative rights” since the saying, “Your right to use your fist stops where my nose shows up” perfectly expresses the accurate sense of this principle, in other words, we are not entitled to be molested. The “positive rights” notion, on the other hand, calls on one to perform specific things for others, such as providing healthcare or treating them with minimal decency. This is why the idea is frequently brought up in political discussions to address the limits of the power of the state (Carlyle, 2004).

Adel asserts once more that he shouldn't be held accountable for what occurred, he claims that he was the victim of exploitation from Naira and her family:

القاضي: احكيلنا يا محمد إيه اللي حصل؟

عادل: أنا يا افندم, هو أنا بس حابب أبين حاجة, أنا وهي ارتبطنا في فترة من حياتنا في بداية الكلية, وأنا كنت مسئول عنها, كنت بعملها كل حاجة محتاجاها وكل حاجة هي تطلبها, هي كانت حتى بتشتكيلي من أهلها وأنا كنت واقف جنبها بمثابة حد مسئول عنها وكنت أنا وهي متفقين على الخطوبة وكانت بتقول ان أهلها عارفين.

Judge: Tell us, Muhammad, what happened?

Adel: I would like to clarify something. She and I got into a relationship at the beginning of college, and I was responsible for her. I used to do everything she needed and everything she asked for. She used to even complain to me from her family, and I was standing beside her as if I was responsible for her, and she and I agreed on the engagement.

In another excerpt from the confessions, he was persuading her to give up the modelling career. He insisted on picturizing himself as the exploited side of the story:

وانا كنت بلومها وهي كانت خلاص بدأت في الطريق اللي هي ماشية فيه وكده, وانا كنت بلومها على طريقة حياتها وكده, كانت تقعد تقوللي محدش بيصرف عليا, محدش بيديني جنيهه وكده, وكانت بتعيطلي فأنا وقفت معاها تاني ووقفت جنبها تاني,

, and I blamed her, but she kept telling me that no one would give me a penny, so I supported her again and helped her again, based on the promise between me and her that she would keep away from the things she was looking for.

He repeated over and over how many times he supported, and backed her up while her family were giving up on her:

لحد بقى ما جيت في مرة حصل بينا مشكلة وكده وروحت البيت أشوف ايه الموضوع على اساس ان اهلها عارفين اكتشفت ان ابوها ميعرفش اي حاجة وامها بس هي اللي كانت عارفاني لأنني كنت وصلتهم قبل كده, وابوها كان قاعد ميعرفش الموضوع فعلى باله إنني كنت جاي أتخانق مع بنته, فقعد يشد معايا وكده, وبعدين بقى بعد الموقف ده قعدنا أسبو عين بالضبط,

وانا كنت بعملها كل حاجة وكانت حجتك ان محدش بيصرف عليكي وانا بعملك كل حاجة فانت مش محتاجة اللي بتعمله ده.

Until once we had a clash, so I went to her home to find out what the matter was, on the grounds that her father was aware of our relationship, I discovered that her father did not know anything, and her mother only knew me because I had accompanied her home before, and her father was sitting and did not know the matter, so he thought that I was coming to fight with his daughter, he fought with me and so on, after this situation we stayed apart for exactly two weeks.

, and I used to do everything for her, her excuse was that no one gives her money, and I do everything for you, so you do not need what you are doing.

He is making an effort to present a positive image of himself and remove any potential stigma linked with his behavior as he insists that he didn't mean to hurt his victim. But even though he had no malicious intent, his victim died.

***c- The Negation of a Victim:***

When talking about his misdeed, Adel also seemed to overlook the victim. Once more, he frequently avoided using the first person and instead described what someone might think of a victim. He never mentioned her name, rather he referred to her as "she" in his forty-five-minute-long confessions. Despite talking about her more abstractly, he believed that his crime was justified in his mind.

بعد فترة من الارتباط اتضح انها واخداني مرحلة في حياتها عشان كانت حاطة في دماغها إنها توصل لحاجات معينة, فهي كانت واخداني مرحلة ووصلت للحاجات دي, ولو موصلتشي هتفضل جنبي عادي, و كنت حابب أبين للناس اللي بيقولوا أن انا متشدد ومش متشدد أن أنا عرفتها وهي موديل وأنا كنت أصلا مأجل حربية وكده, يعني مليش علاقة بالحاجات اللي هما بيتهموني بيها دي.

After a period of the relationship, it became clear that she took me as a temporary stage in her life because she was planning in her mind to achieve certain things. She took me as a temporary stage and reached these things. I would have stayed in her life if she hadn't achieved these things. And I would like to clarify for people who say that I'm an extremist that I knew her when she started her career as a model, and I was applying for the Military back then, I mean, it has nothing to do with the things they accuse me of.

In his argument, the victim exposed herself to victimization. Even if it was unintentional, Adel is still attributing the victim's suffering to her rather than to him, the abuser. The judge by the end of the trial proceedings asked Adel about his conceptualization of love to detect what kind of feelings he truly had for Naira, Adel's response was over-broadened and generalized then he went back to defend himself from the crime:

اللي يزعل ان انت تبقى كويس مع حد والحد ده يستغلك -ياخذ رشفة ماء- اللي بيزعل  
وبيأثر في الواحد انك, انك تبقى كويس مع حد ومعملتش معاه حاجة وحشة والحد ده هو  
اللي يستغلك ويضحك عليك الناس ويقل بيك ويبهلك وكده بس , انما الحب, قبلنا وبعدنا  
حبوا وهيحبوا عادي يعني لو انا حاظط في دماغي كده كنت هعمل الموضوع ده من  
زمان..

The thing that gets you upset is that you are good with someone, and this one exploits you – sips some water- the thing that gets you upset that the person you’re good with is the one who exploits you, bluffs you, underestimates you, humiliates you, but love... people in the past and the future normally can love.

Once more, Adel avoided taking the blame for the murder and instead blamed the victim for what happened to him. It is obvious that Adel felt exploited and victimized rather than his victim. As a result, he is once more shifting the responsibility and stigma away from himself and onto the victim. Perhaps nothing would have happened if the victim had not teased him, or done whatever he believed the victim had done to “deserve” the victimization - although, it is highly likely that the victimization would have still happened regardless of whether the victim done anything or not - (Hickey, 2015). As the victim bears responsibility for their victimization, the stigma connected with the perpetrator is reduced when he places the blame for the victimization on the victim.

#### ***d- Condemning the Victim:***

The final justification strategy Adel appeared to use was ‘condemning the victim’. After being interrogated by the judge about the moment before committing the crime, Adel included in his statement the outer appearance of the victim indirectly. He was describing the scene right before killing the victim, where she was chatting with another girl with a loose hair like her or not wearing a headscarf. According to E. Markman, and Hutchinson (1984), labels are category markers used for representing a category. To support this idea to draw inductive results, labeling serves as a category marker. As an illustration, some academics proposed that labeling is motivated more by intentional than unintentional factors (Sloutsky & Napolitano 2003). In a community that considers covering the hair to be a demonstration of being a person who is committed to religious rituals, and leaving

it is considered a sin, Adel's indication to this point implied a condemnation of the victim for abandoning such ritual:

القاضي: في النص ساعة دي محاولتش تقول يعني ملوش لازمة وارجع يا واد بلاش  
قتل ولا حاجة

محمد: ما هو انا بحكيك الفترة دي. الكلام ده كله في نص ساعة, اللي هو عمالة تتكلم  
مع واحدة جنبها.

القاضي: اللي هي منة ولا حد تاني؟

محمد: هي واحدة مسيبة شعرها زيها مش عارف هي مين

Judge: Within this time, you didn't try to tell yourself, there is no need to kill her, I will go back without killing her

Muhammad: I am telling you that during the whole half an hour she was making fun of me with her friend and talking about me.

Judge: Was she Menna or someone else?

Muhammad: She was a loose-haired girl like her. I did not know who she was.

In another excerpt he insisted on laying blame on her of pushing him to commit his crime by making fun of him in public with her friend, he also stated “You deserve what will happen to you”. He tried to justify his misdeed as a reply for being mocked by a girl in public:

محمد:.. أيوا جوا الباص فاتعصبت بقي واتضايقت بقي اللي هو انت تستاهلي بقي, كل  
شوية تبص, واحنا قاعدين ورا. الشباب بيبقوا قاعدين ورا والبنات قدام وكل شوية تكلم  
صاحبها اللي جنبها وتقوم تديّر وتبص وتبص وتضحك وكده فأنا بقي اتضايقت اللي  
هو انتي ..

هي متعرفش إن أنا معايا السكينة ولا حاجة .

خلاص بقي الطريقة بتاعها قفلتني اللي هو إنت لو كنتي في حالك مكنتش....

Muhammad: ..Yes, inside the bus, I got nervous and upset. I said to myself: “You deserve what will happen to you”. Every once in a while, she looked back at me and made fun of me. I was sitting behind her with the guys, and the girls were in the front, and every

time she talked to her friend who was next to her, they looked back at me and laughed and that's how I got bothered...

She didn't know that I had a knife.

I said to myself "That's it, it's gonna be it" The way she used to make fun of me, provoked me. I mean if she kept silent I wouldn't.....

Then he finalized his appeal by clarifying how the victim destroyed his life and dragged him to commit his crime, he claims that she provoked him to murder her:

القاضي: يعني الحاجات اللي في الباص دي ضايقتك؟

محمد: ضايقتني . لو انا مقرر ولقيتها في حالها مبتعملش حاجة وانا مقرر مية في المية ايه اللي هيخليني اجي جنب واحدة في حالها مبتعملش حاجة لكن انت انت السبب في كل ده . انت اللي مدمرة حياتي . المفروض بقى أنا اللي اقعد اضحك وانا اللي اقعد اتكلم وانا اللي اقعد اعمل . معملتش الكلام ده كله وانت اللي قاعده بتعملي الكلام ده كله.

Judge: So, what happened on the bus bothered you?

Muhammad: She bothered me. If I made up my mind to harm her but found her minding her own business, I could not have done anything. Why should I harm a girl who is minding her own business? But she was the reason for all this. She destroyed my life. I am the one who was supposed to be laughing and making fun of her, and I'm the one who was supposed to sit down and talk about her. I didn't do all this, and she was the one who did all this.

This way, he was again transferring blame away from himself and onto the victim by labeling her and accusing her of provoking him to kill her.

## **5- Discussion**

*Why would some people empathize with a killer?*

It appears that Adel utilized most of the neutralization discourse strategies when recounting his crime to vindicate his misdeed. Despite his "true" identity of being a

killer being exposed due to eyewitnesses, arrest, trial, and conviction, this killer tried his best to use neutralization discourse strategies in an attempt to retain control over the narrative, maintain his morally decent self, and minimize the stigmatization around him of being a murderer. Despite being arrested and convicted of an atrocious crime (i.e., attempted murder), so many people empathized with him and even more romanticized his misdeed to be interpreted as a defense for his love and dignity. This explains why social media users, most of whom are women, sympathized with Adel after being arrested. It is not a new phenomenon to romanticize killers, since many American TV shows that have the same genre have many fans and millions of followers around the globe (Donnelly, 2012). Sadly, certain audiences admit that these shows made them sympathize with the killers. There are innumerable posts on social media platforms hailing these TV shows. This is not just a TV show issue. It's a problem that frequently arises around the real-life crime genre, with mostly young women admiring bad men (Densen-Gerber, 1993). Innumerable TikTok videos are lip-synching of actors' roles in serial killer TV series which indicates the hype from young people around this kind of genre.

Serial killers are given a sense of appeal by being depicted as sophisticated, and intriguing by casting actors who are appealing to represent them. However, this is not always a negative thing, as employing handsome and enticing performers can help express how mass murderers can lure innocent victims in. It does indicate that certain murderers were capable of hooking others, they had some captivating qualities—though they were also incredibly manipulative. It can also serve as a lesson; pay attention to our preconceptions. We typically connect charm with integrity, kindness, assurance, and deformity with unfavorable characteristics. Pointing out the detrimental impacts of enhancing and glamorizing perpetrators of crime is not novel nor unique (Densen-Gerber, 1993).

To explain this point, below are some examples of social media users' responses to Adel's funeral:

**Example (1):**

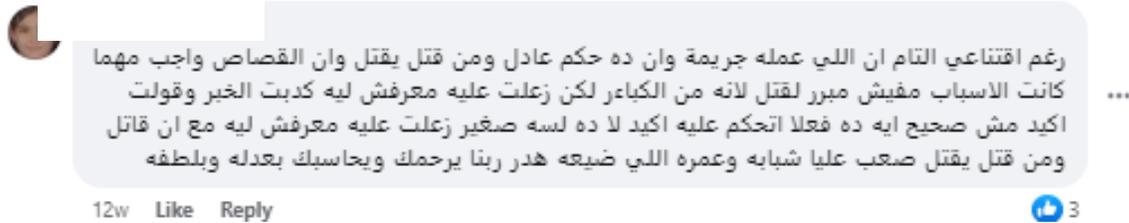
A verified page of news on Facebook (Akhbarak.net, 2023) posted about Adel's funeral and how little were the people who attended the ceremonies. The responses

*Why Do Some People Empathize with Murderers? The Role of Neutralization Discourse in Romanticizing a Murder to the Public*

were divided into three categories: the first one was people who prayed for him with mercy and forgiveness. The second one was people showing sympathy with him and his family and how he was “dragged to commit this crime”, others were sympathizing with how young he is to be sentenced to death. The third category was sending comments of wrath on the victim and her family for being the reason for the boy being sentenced to death. In this particular post which had more than 1000 comments, there was no single comment sympathizing with the victim. Below are some samples of the comments:



These comments are supplicating God for Adel and his family to be endowed with patience, especially his mother. The second comment is praying for his mother to be showered with patience and for this affliction to be listed in her good deeds.



In the previous comment, the user explains how she is completely convinced that what he committed was a crime and there are no justifications for such a sin, but she felt sad for him and sympathized with him being young. She also prayed for him to be treated with mercy and gentleness.



In this comment the user supplicated God for Adel’s soul to be showered with mercy and the victim’s family to be ashamed and humiliated, the female user also prayed for God to take revenge on the victim’s family.

### **Example (2):**

In the same vein and with the interactive audience with real-life crime TV shows that target women, the next snapshot from the backstage of a female actor stained with blood as she was acting to be slaughtered by a serial killer in the TV series. A user posted this picture and sarcastically put a caption as follows “What would happen if I just showed a strand of my hair out of my veil, babe..?”. The user

*Why Do Some People Empathize with Murderers? The Role of Neutralization Discourse in Romanticizing a Murder to the Public*

indicated that he would not let his girlfriend finish the sentence and would slaughter her instantly if she said so. The post is terrifying, and the comments are horrific.



With 3,500 shares and more than 780 comments, the comments were as follows:



The comment above is a clear warning from ‘presumably’ a boyfriend to his girlfriend to beware of what could happen to her if she showed a strand out of her

hair. It was a clear threat to be aware and scared of the repercussions of not obeying him.



Another comment comes with explicit threats sugarcoated with laughing emojis; the user warns his girlfriend that he “one day” could slaughter her if she doesn’t obey him.



“I wish the message is delivered; I warn you” is another comment on the post above. These comments are only the tip of an iceberg lurking inside a novel unanimous mentality of violence against women (Blank, T.J. 2013).

It’s crucial to remember that many of these criminals’ proponents are young women and that real-life crime is typically read more frequently by women than by men. A recent study found that 72 percent of real-life crime podcast listeners are female (Lilly, et al. 2011).

## **6- Conclusion:**

The present research focused on a qualitative investigation of Adel’s neutralization discursive strategies. The investigation showed that he utilized four neutralization strategies to justify his actions: The negation of accountability, the negation of causing harm, the negation of a victim, and the condemnation of the victim. These justification approaches were introduced by Sykes and Matza (1957) to explain the justification for illegal activity. To address low-severity offenses, their approach was presented in the setting of juvenile delinquency. The current research provides convincing examples of how these justification strategies have been used in some of the worst horrific offenses (rape, brutal treatment, and murder). This has

significant ramifications for how broadly applicable the theory is. Specifically, it refers to the broad cognitive reasoning structure. Those justifications have been used in several situations, which should be thoroughly investigated in later study projects. For instance, after demonstrating that this theory can explain wrongdoing committed by a killer, it would be intriguing to carry out a qualitative study into how the negation of the victim and causing harm can be employed in situations where the perpetrator does not even mention the victim by name.

It is also important to note that Adel was aware that he had created a variety of personas—such as an outstanding university student who is helping ‘the victim’ in her assignments, or a caring boyfriend to his girlfriend who gives her money and protects her from a dysfunctional family. Additionally, he may have been better able to create these numerous virtual social identities and control how he presented himself in diverse social situations by using the justification strategies he relied on.

I must address the significant genderized component that comes out of the neutralization discursive strategies analysis of Adel to wrap up this paper. His use of two neutralization strategies—namely, the negation of causing harm to the victims and the negation of the victim entity—reflects the sexist dogma Adel has. When it is taken into account the gender of both the murderer and the victim, represents one of the most extreme examples of females being forced to submit to male desires, in other words, if the female does not comply with the male needs, he will take her life (Gathings, and Kylie, 2013). In the investigation of other similar murders, the genderizing of these crimes is evident (Zimbardo, 2007). If altering blame for their crimes to the surrounding culture is a common strategy used by killers to justify their conduct, it highlights important issues regarding gender roles beliefs, and the dehumanization of women in society.

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## لماذا يتعاطف بعض الناس مع القتلة؟ دور خطاب التحييد في إضفاء طابع رومانسي لجريمة قتل أمام العامة

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### المستخلص:

في مدينة صغيرة هادئة في مصر، وفي حادثة مروعة تخلو من الإنسانية، تعرضت نيرة أشرف، الطالبة في جامعة المنصورة، للطعن عدة مرات بلا رحمة حتى لفظت أنفاسها الأخيرة في وضح النهار أمام المئات. مدينة آمنة تحولت إلى مسرح جريمة في لمح البصر. وكانت هذه الجريمة الشنعاء بمثابة ناقوسا للخطر للعديد من المشاكل النفسية والاجتماعية التي لم يلتفت لها أحد من قبل. تهدف هذه الدراسة لتحليل الاعترافات الجنائية لمحمد عادل قاتل نيرة أشرف وتحليل سلوكه باستخدام تحليل الخطاب التحييدي. وتتضمن هذه الدراسة تحليل اعترافاته من الناحية اللغوية. واستندت الاعترافات إلى شهادته الأخيرة أمام المحكمة من مقطع فيديو على موقع يوتيوب قام بتحميله أحد الصحفيين بصحيفة المصري اليوم. يلعب خطاب التحييد دورًا رئيسيًا في تفسير سبب انتشار السلوك الإجرامي. تحتوي الاعترافات على مجموعة من استراتيجيات خطاب التحييد. ولذلك، تقدم هذه الدراسة تحليلاً يغطي هذه الاستراتيجيات منطقيًا باستخدام المنهجين الاستنتاجي والاستقرائي. يُستخدم إطار سايكس وماتزا (1957) لتحليل السمات اللغوية للمجرمين. حيث وجد أن القتلة كانوا أكثر ميلاً من المجرمين الآخرين الذين يرتكبون جرائم لا تنطوي على القتل إلى شرح وتبرير سلوكهم الإجرامي، مما يعني ضمناً المزيد من ادعاءات السبب والنتيجة. يشير التحليل إلى أن القتلة يميلون إلى اعتبار الجريمة نتيجة حتمية لخطة ما (شيء "كان يجب" تنفيذه للوصول إلى الهدف)؛ وبالتالي فإن وحشيتهم متعمدة ومقصودة مقارنة بوحشية المجرمين الآخرين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: لغة المجرمين - تحليل خطاب التحييد - إضفاء الطابع الرومانسي على القتلة - الوسم - العنف ضد المرأة

## Appendix

### The Transcription of The Confessions of Mohammed Adel in Court (Translated)

القاضي: احكيلنا يا محمد إيه اللي حصل؟

عادل: أنا يا افندم, هو أنا بس حابب أبين حاجة, أنا وهي ارتبطنا في فترة من حياتنا في بداية الكلية, وأنا كنت مسؤل عنها, كنت بعملها كل حاجة محتاجاها وكل حاجة هي تطلبها, هي كانت حتى بتشتكيلي من أهلها وأنا كنت واقف جنبها بمثابة حد مسؤل عنها وكنت أنا وهي متفقين على الخطوبة وكانت بتقول ان أهلها عارفين, وكل ده كان مسجل في رسايل ما بيني وما بينها, ومرات كتير كانت بتقولي تعالى وأقعد في البيت وكده, وأهلي عارفين, وأنا كنت برفض عشان كنا لسه في بداية الارتباط وكده.

Judge: Tell us, Muhammad, what happened?

Adel: I would like to clarify something. She and I got engaged during a period of our lives at the beginning of college, and I was responsible for her. I used to do everything she needed and everything she asked for. She used to even complain to me from her family, and I was standing beside her as if I was responsible for her, she and I agreed on the engagement, and she used to say that her family knew, and all of this was recorded in messages between me and her, and many times she would tell me to come and stay at home and so on, and my family knew, and I refused because we were still at the beginning of the engagement and so on.

بعد فترة من الارتباط اتضح انها واخداني مرحلة في حياتها عشان كانت حاطة في دماغها إنها توصل لحاجات معينة, فهي كانت واخداني مرحلة ووصلت للحاجات دي, ولو موصلتشي هتفضل جنبي عادي, و كنت حابب أبين للناس اللي بيقولوا أن انا متشدد ومش متشدد أن أنا عرفتها وهي موديل وأنا كنت أصلا مأجل حربية وكده, يعني مليش علاقة بالحاجات اللي هما بيتهموني بيها دي.

After a period of the relationship, it became clear that she took me as a temporary stage in her life because she was planning in her mind to achieve certain things. She took me to a temporary stage and reached these things. I would have stayed in her life if she hadn't achieved these things. And I would like to clarify for people who

say that I'm an extremist that I knew her when she started her career as a model, and I was applying for the Military back then, I mean, it has nothing to do with the things they accuse me of.

ولما جينا ارتبطنا وكده حصل بقا أول خلاف , كانت هي بتحكي لي بتقولي إنها عايزة تسبب شغل الموديل وكده وهتشتغل في مجالات تانية وأنا عادي عشان أنا وهي كنا بنحب بعض فمكنش فارق معايا هي شغالة إيه ولا هتشتغل إيه؟ كنت بوافقها في كل حاجة وبعد كده اتضح ان انها كانت بتكذب عليا ومفيش الكلام ده ولا كان أهلها عارفين ولا أي حاجة من الحاجات اللي بتقول عليها دي لحد ما حصلت فترة الفترة اللي عرفتها فيها, كنا بنتقابل وكنا بننزل وكنا بنخرج في كل حنة, وكنت بعملها كل اللي هي عايزاه.

When we got together, and started our relationship, we got into our first disagreement. She used to tell me that she wanted to leave the modeling career and so on, and she would work in other fields, I was okay, because she and I loved each other, so I had no problem with what she was doing or what would she do. I used to be okay with her in everything, and after that, it became clear that she was lying to me and there was no such thing, nor did her family know any of the things she was saying about herself, the period in which I knew her, we used to meet and we used to go out every time, and I used to do everything she wants.

وحصل رجوع بعد فترة ال ٣ شهور دي وكل حاجة كانت بتقعد تعطي لي تقولي ان الكلام ده كله غصب عنها, وانا كنت بلومها وهي كانت خلاص بدأت في الطريق اللي هي ماشية فيه وكده, وانا كنت بلومها على طريقة حياتها وكده, كانت تقعد تقولي محدش بيصرف عليا, محدش بيديني جنيه وكده, وكانت بتعطي لي فأنا وقفت معاها تاني ووقفت جنبها تاني, على أساس الوعد اللي ما بيني وبينها إنها تبعد بقى عن الحاجات اللي هي ماشية فيها دي. وكنا بنتقابل بقى, في الفترة دي هي كانت في القاهرة, كانت كل ما تنزل المحلة كنا نتقابل, واتعرفت على مامتها وكانت بتحكي لي على المشاكل اللي ما بين باباها ومامتها بس مشاكل عائلية عادية.

There was a comeback after these 3 months of break-up, she kept telling me that the road she chose to pursue was out of her control, and I was blaming her, but she kept telling me that no one gives me a penny and that, so I supported her again and helped her again, based on the promise between me and her that she would keep away from the things she is looking for. And we used to meet again, during this period she was in Cairo, every time she went back to Mahala we used to meet, and I was introduced to her mother. She used to tell me about the problems between her father and her mother, but they were common family problems.

لحد بقي ما جيت في مرة حصل بينا مشكلة وكده وروحت البيت تشوف ايه الموضوع على اساس ان اهله عارفين اكتشفت ان ابوها ميعرفش اي حاجة وامها بس هي اللي كانت عارفاني لأنني كنت وصلتهم قبل كده, وابوها كان قاعد ميعرفش الموضوع فعلى باله اني كنت جاي اتخانق مع بنته, فقعد يشد معايا وكده, وبعدين بقي بعد الموقف ده قعدنا أسبوعين بالطبط,

وانا كنت بعملها كل حاجة وكانت حجتك ان محدش بيصرف عليكي وانا بعملك كل حاجة فانت مش محتاجة اللي بتعمله ده.

Once we had a problem, so I went to her home to find out what the matter was, because her father was aware of our relationship, I discovered that her father did not know anything, and her mother only knew me because I had accompanied her home before, and her father was sitting and did not know the matter, so he thought that I was coming to fight with his daughter, he fought with me and so on, after this situation we stayed apart for exactly two weeks.

I used to do everything for her, and her pretext was that no one gives her money, and I do everything for you, so you do not need what you are doing.

شهر ونص بعد حوار أهلها ده, لقيت واحدة بتتصل عليا وبتهددني وبتقول ان فتحت بقلك هجيبلك كذا وكذا وان قلت اي حاجة هعمل فيك وهسوي وهفضحك وهتيلي عليك, طبعا أنا اتصدمت, المكالمة دي استمرت ساعة, أنا طبعا اتصدمت فيها وقالتي كلام مينفعش أنا أقوله وكمية تهديدات.

A month and a half after this conversation with her family, a woman called me and threatened me and said “If you open your mouth, I will harm you, and if you say anything, I will do anything to stop you and I will slander you and accuse you”. Of course, I was shocked. This call lasted an hour.

أهلي طبعا مكانش عاجبهم الموضوع , كان ليهم نظرة وفاهمين الدنيا, فضلت مصدوم فترة , جيت في يوم رديت لها كل الشتايم وكده, فجيت في يوم وعملت إيمل ورديت كل الشتايم كرد إعتبار, عشان هي شتمت وقامت جاية عملاي بلوك من كل حنة, قمت دخلها بقي ورادد اعتباري على الكلام اللي هي قالتة,

Of course, my family didn't like it, they had anticipation and were wise enough to realize that something fishy was going on, and they. I was shocked for a while. One day I responded to all her insults and so on, so one day I created an email and sent her all the insults as a response, because she insulted me and blocked me on every social platform, I emailed her and made her pay back what she did to me.

كنا احنا أياميها بداية الامتحانات , كنا في سنة تانية, كانت فاكدة إن أنا طالب منها كل الحاجات اللي انا عملتها معاها يعني وكده, رديت لها الحاجة دي كلها, وهي كانت فاكدة ان انا هرجع اطلب بكل حاجة,

قامت باعثة صاحبيتها تقولي انت لو فتحت بوقك وطالبت بحاجة , الحاجات دي كلها انا هعمل بيها محضر وهأذيك, وهجيبك ناس يعني وكده لو فتحت بوقك, وقعدنا ٣ شهور احنا مش عايزين حاجة منك و الحاجة اللي انا كتبتها انتي كتبتني زيها, وهي تقول لاه وهي مصممة انا هعمل وهسوي وهروح النيابة.

قلتلها خلاص اللي انت عايزاه اعلميه و انا مش عايز حاجة وانت عمالة تقوليلي هعمل كذا وهسوي كذا, وكيل النيابة: الكلام ده حصل سنة كام يا محمد؟

محمد: ٢٠٢١

These days we were at the beginning of the exams. We were in our second year at college. She thought that I would ask her for all the things that I gave her. I mean, I gave her everything, and she thought that I would ask for my things back.

She told her friend, to tell me to keep my mouth shut, and if I opened my mouth and demanded anything, she would report me to the police and she could harm me, and she would bring people to hurt me. I mean, if I opened my mouth, we stayed for 3 months.

I told her that's it, what you want me to do, and I don't want anything.

Prosecutor: When did this happen, Muhammad?

Muhammad: 2021

وقتلها خلاص اعلمي اللي انت عايزاه.

الكلام ده في شهر ٣, كنت بكلم اهلها عشان يحلوا الموضوع, فكانت ببعت لأمها وأبوها واخواتها عشان يساعدونا ننهي الحوار ده, قالولي احنا ملناش دعوة, واتكلم معاها, اخواتها البنات قلولي احنا ملناش دعوة واحنا ناس متجوزة وانتوا حريين مع بعض وملناش دعوة بالكلام ده واتكلم معها في الكلية,

جيت أتكلم معاها في الكلية, الكلام ده كان بداية, امتحانات آخر السنة في سنة تانية, ورحت أتكلم معاها في الكلية على أساس الكلام اللي هما قالوه أهلها وان هما مفهمينها وكده.

And I told her ok, do what you want.

This incident took place back talk in March, I was talking to her family to solve the issue, so I sent her mother, father, and sisters to help us end this conversation, they

told me that we had nothing to do with that matter, and I talked to her sisters and they told me we have nothing to do with you and her, we have our spouses, and talk to her with her at college.

I went to talk to her at college, this was the beginning of the final exams of the second year. I started talking to her at college based on what her family said what they told her and so on.

ورحت أتكلم معاها في الكلية, طلع ده كمين, وراحت اتبليت عليا وقالت ده عايز يتهجم عليا وبيتعرضلي وكلام بقى كتير بقى فالأمن جه وخذ بطاقتها, الأمن مكنش مصدقها لأننا في الكلية معظم الناس عارفيني هناك فعارفين أن أنا مليش في الحاجات اللي هي بتقول عليها دي.

فالأمن جه خد بطاقتها وخذ بطاقتي, ورحنا بعد الامتحان زي تحقيق كده, هي بقى عمالة تقول, بتقول لظابط الأمن, أنا معرفوش وواحد بيطاردني, واتقدملي وأهلي رفضوه وبيطاردني وبيتهجم عليا, وبيتعرضلي في كل حنة والكلام ده, ومعرفوش ومليش أي علاقة بيه,

I went to talk to her in college, it was an ambush, and she started screaming that I was trying to harass her and said that she threatened that she would give me a scandal, and she said a lot, so the security came and took her ID card, the security did not believe her because we are in the same college, most of the people know me there, so they know I have nothing to do with the things she says about me.

The security came and took her ID card and took mine, and we went after the exam to an investigation like this, she kept saying to the security officer, I don't know him and he is someone who is chasing me, and he proposed to my family and they refused him and he chases me and attacks me, and he bothers me in every place and this so on, and they don't know him and I have nothing to do with him,

وبعدين لقيت ظابط الأمن جاي يقولي الكلام ده, قمت جاي فاتح الموبايل وطلعتله بقى كل حاجة, فقال لي إيه أنتوا بقالكوا أهو سنة بتتكلمو مع بعض, إيه الكلام اللي بتقوله ده بقى؟ وسمعته بقى كل حاجة, المحادثات بقى اللي ما بيننا وكده, ففهم يعني إنها بتحور وكده, فقال لي يابني البت مصت دمك في الآخر وأنا لو منك هفكسلها وكده, قتلته يا باشا أنا كنت جاي أتكلم معاها على أساس الكلام اللي سمعته من أهلها اللي هو قالهولي إني أتكلم معاها

وأشوف إيه الخلاف... فأنا كنت رايح على الأساس ده, فرجعلي بطاقتي ومشاني ومعرفش عمل معاها إيه بعد كده,

Then I found the security officer coming to tell me what she said, so I got out my mobile phone and showed him everything, so he told me based on this, you have been together for a year, why does she do this? so he understood that she was lying and so, and he said, "My son, the girl sucked your blood in the end, and if I were you, I will let her go." And so, I told him, Sir, I came to talk to her based on her family's advice to figure out the reason behind our argument ... Then he gave me my ID card back, and I don't know what he did with her afterward.

القاضي: لغاية هذا التاريخ يا محمد لما أقنعت الضابط في الجامعة....

هي بقى فضلت تقول في الكلية أن أنا عايزة أرتبط بيها غصب عنها, وإنها مش عارف إيه وكده وإنها واحدة مظلومة, طبعا اللي عارفني مبيسمعوش الكلام ده, واللي ميعرفش بقى بيصدقها وكده وببسمع كلامها, وهي بقى مستغلية إنها بنت بقى وكده وتخش تكلم الشباب وتقول حاجات بقى

في الفترة دي بقى كنا احنا لسه في تانية

Judge: Until this date, Muhammad, why did you convince the officer in the university...

She kept saying in college that I wanted to marry her against her will, that she did not know what that was, and that she was the oppressed one. Of course, those who knew me did not listen to her, and those who did not know continued to believe her and listen to her words, she took advantage of being a girl, and she was talking to other young men and saying stuff.

In this period, we were still in our second year of college.

وبعد كده خدت الشات بتاعها والصور وكده وبعثها لقرابيها, فقرابيها قالولي انت كده بتشهر ومش بتشهر بيها, قتلهم وأنا مش بشهر, الصور دي أنا مش جايبها من برة, الصور دي بنتكم هي اللي منزلها والشتايم دي بصوت بنتكم, وكل الحاجات دي بصوت بنتكم والكلام ده كله كلام بنتكم, أنا مش مسجلها حاجة غصب عنها ولا مصورلها حاجة غصب عنها, الحاجات دي كلها بارادتها ومن غير أي طريقة وحشة يعني فقالولي ماشي

واحنا غلطانين وعايزين بقى نلم الموضوع ونحل الخلاف اللي ما بينكوا وكده واحنا كنا غلطانين, الكلام ده كلام أمها واختها, طب عايزين نقابلك.

After that, I took her chats and photos and so on and sent them to her relatives, so her relatives told me that you are defaming her, I told them that I was not fabricating these photos, these photos are your daughter's and, on her account, and these insults are in your daughter's voice. I didn't record anything against her will. All these things are by her will and without any coercive way. So they told me we wanted to meet you. We are wrong, we want to settle things down, her mother and her sister said these words.

القاضي: بدأنا سنة تالته يا محمد العلاقة كان شكلها إيه؟

محمد: ما أنا عايز أقول حاجة مهمة في النقطة دي, أنا صدقتهم وقمت رايح من غير ما أعرف حد من أهلي فروحتلها, روجتلم البيت, راحوا جابولي بلطجية, ومضوني على وصولات وكمبيالات وحاجات من دي على بياض وأبوها قاللي أنا مليش دعوة بالكلام ده كله, انتوا حريين مع بعض تولع فيك تولع فيها أنا مليش دعوة بالكلام ده كله وخلاص أنا شلت إيدي منها وانتوا حرين مع بعض بس احنا بنمضيك على الكلام ده عشان نضمن ان انت متجيبش سيرتنا في أي حاجة, ومضوني بقى على الوصولات وكده وخلصت سنة تانية على كده,

من هنا بقى فكرت ان أنا إيه أنتقم منها بقى,

القاضي: كان باقي اد ايه على دراسة سنة تالته؟

Judge: When you started the third year in college, Muhammad. What was the relationship like?

Muhammad: I want to say something important on this point. I believed her family and went to her house without telling my family. Her family brought me thugs and forced me to sign papers and cheques, and her father told me that he had nothing to do with my relationship with his daughter and I neither care about her nor you, but I'm making you sign these papers to make sure you will not vilify our reputation. That happened at the end of my second year at college.

From there I started to think about taking revenge on her.

Judge: How much time was left to start the third year in college?

محمد: شهرين كده ولا حاجة, شهرين بقى مكنتش حاطط في دماغي إن أنا أموتها, أنا جاتلي فكرة إن أنا أنتقم لنفسي, اللي هو انتوا انتوا كده أدتوني كتير

القاضي: امال امتي فكرة الانتقام جتلك؟

محمد : ما هي جاتلي فكرة الانتقام من اليوم ده بس مش بالشكل اللي هو إيه..

القاضي: كانت دراسة سنة تالته بدأت ولا لسه؟

محمد: كان لسه شهر بس انا جاتلي فكرة الانتقام مش بالشكل اللي انا نفذته, جاتلي ان أنا أرد اعتباري وكرامتي بس. دي الفكرة اللي جاتلي, مع بداية تالته هي بقى فضلت تلسن عليا وتقول كلام مبيحصلشي.

القاضي: محاولتش تقرب منها في الفترة دي؟

محمد: إيه؟

القاضي: محاولتش تقرب منها في الفترة دي؟

محمد: حاولت إن أنا أهدى ومخدش في موضوع كرامتي وأتعامل معاها كويس تاني لكن هي مكانتش.

القاضي: مخليتش فرصة

محمد: آه.. الناس بقى فهموني قالولي تلاقيتها فاكراك إنك بتعمل كده عشان توقعها متعرفش أن دي مشاعرك بجد يعني وان انت نفسك تنهي الموضوع ومش عايز اي خناقات وخلافات ولا عايز أتأذي ولا يحصل أي مشاكل.

Muhammad: Two months were left, I didn't think that I would kill her, I had an idea that I would take revenge, because she hurt me a lot, but didn't think of killing her.

Judge: When did the idea of killing her come to you?

Muhammad: The idea of revenge came to me since this day, but not to kill her.

Judge: Did the third year at college start?

Muhammad: It was a month away to start, but the idea of revenge came to me, not in the way to carry it out. This is the idea that came to me, at the beginning of my

third year in college, she kept telling rumors about me and saying things that did not happen.

Judge: Didn't you try to get close to her during this period?

Mohammed: What?

Judge: Didn't you try to get close to her during this period?

Muhammad: I tried to calm down and not deal with the issue as a matter of dignity and communicate with her again, but she didn't allow me to.....

Judge: She didn't give you a chance

Muhammad: Yes. People advised me, they told me that she would think that you were trying to ambush her, and she knew nothing about your true feelings for her. I mean, I wanted to end the matter and I didn't want any quarrels and disagreements, and you didn't want to get hurt or to be involved in any problems.

كنت ببعتها كلام بقى كلام كويس وكده, فأهلها بقى كانوا يشوفوا الكلام ده ويقولوا ده بيجري وراها ومش بيجري وراها وانا كنت ببينلها يا ستي مفيش في دماغى الكلام ده وانا مسامح في اللي انت عملتيه, وننهي الحاجات دي بقى, بس ده اللي كان قصدي, ده اللي كنت أقصده من كلامي,  
لحد ما جه تالته وكده, هي بقى أبوها كلمني, على الموبايل,

لحد قبل بداية تالته بحاجة بسيطة, باباها كلمني وكده ومعرفشي كان عايز إيه وكده, فقالي احنا لازم نتقابل, وعايزين نقعد ونشوف حل يعني, ومحتاج مساعدتك, فأنا معرفشي هو كان عايز إيه بالظبط, هنا بقى مكنتش صدمة بالنسبة لي, لأن اللي أنا سمعته واللي أنا شفته, متوقع اللي حصل يعني, فقعد يقولي أنا زيي زيك وانت اضحك عليك وانا اضحك عليا, هي امها هي السبب في الكلام ده كله, وهي اللي عايزاها كده, واعرفي ده وسببي ده, وانا غصب عني, قائله أمانا لما جيت البيت قعدت تقولي اللي هو انا مليش دعوة وكذا وكذا, قاللي الكلام ده كله عشان امها, امها هي اللي كانت ماسكة الدنيا, ولو كنت قلت غير الكلام ده كان هتبعنلي أهلها وكان هيجصل مشاكل فأنا كنت مضطر ان انا اقول الكلام ده وقعد يحلفلي على المصحف وقعد يعيط يقولي انا زيي زيك انا اتفضحت وهي فضحتني في مستوى مدرسته وفي مستوى منطقتة وكده, بيقوللي مش على الموضوع بتاعك بس, مواضيع كتير, اللي أنا عرفته بقى من بعد كده, أخو جوز اختها في الفترة اللي احنا كنا مرتبطين فيها كانت متعرفة على واحد (أنا بس مش عايز أقول الكلام ده عشان مبيقاش حرام عليا) بس هي كانت متعرفة على واحد وراحت معاه مرسى مطروح في العربية لوحدها عشان نفسها في عالم التصوير والقاهرة والحاجات دي, بس.

I used to send her messages, sweet words, and so on, so her family saw these messages and convinced her that I was stalking her, I used to tell her, there is no such thing in my mind, and I forgive you for what you did, and we should end any remaining disagreements, that was what I meant.

Until the third year of college started and so on, her father called me, on the mobile, and I didn't know what he wanted, so he said, "We have to meet, and we want to talk and figure things out and I need your help". Because I didn't know what he wanted exactly, but I wasn't surprised by what I heard from him, because what I heard and what I saw him, I expected what would happen, so he kept telling me that I was just like you, I'm bluffed just as you. It is her mother who is the reason behind all this, and she is the one who wanted her to be raised like this, once I realized this, I left them. I became angry and asked him why when I came home and talked to you, you threatened me, and so and so. He told me all this because of her mother. Her mother was the one who controls over, and if I had an objection, she would have sent me to her family, and there would have been problems, so I was forced to threaten you. Like you, my reputation was vilified at my workplace in my neighborhood, and so on. He also told me, that it is not only you who is in a relationship with my daughter, there are many relationships. What I became aware of after a while was that she was in a relationship with the brother of her sister's husband during the period we were in a relationship, (I just don't want to say this to not to sin) but she knew someone and went with him to Marsa Matruh in his car alone because she was obsessed of the world of photography, modeling, Cairo and all these things.

القاضي: حاولت تقرب منها بعد ما والدها ما وعدك ومقدرش ينفذ حاولت تتقرب منها؟

محمد: والدها والدها مقدرش ينفذ ليه؟ أنا ووالدها الاتفاق اللي كان بيني وما بين ابوها كان بيقوللي كل الحاجات اللي حصلت دي غصب عني, ومكنتش عايز حاجة ليا, وهو كان بيقوللي انت ساعدني عشان انا انفذ الاتفاق اللي ما بيني وما بينك, انت تعرف كل حاجة, ساعدني اني انا اجيبها ولما انا اجيبها بيتي هيتلم وكده

..... في قسم المحلة وكان رفع قضية انها متغيبه ميعرفش هي فين

..... تكرار للفقرة السابقة.. يبدو عليه الإرهاق في الدقيقة ٣١

وأبوها بيقول انا كنت بروح وبشتغل وبغيب عن البيت عشان اجيب الفلوس يعني وكده لكن أمها هي اللي كانت عايزاها تطلع بالشكل ده والشكل ده هو السبب في اللي حصلك يعني وكده اللي هي التربية اللي اتربتها دي كانت سبب في اللي حصلك يعني.

Judge: Did you try to get close to her after her father promised you and he couldn't keep it? Did you try to get close to her?

Muhammad: Why did her father, her father, was unable to keep his promise? Her father and I had an agreement, he used to tell me all the things that happened and I didn't want that, and he was telling me that he needed my help to get her back to him and reunite with his family.

He told me once that he reported his daughter as absent once at the Mahalla police station, he did not know where she was

.....A repetition of the previous statement.....

(He looks tired in minute 31)

He continued... and her father said that he used to go to work and be away from home to get the money, and so on, but her mother was the one who wanted her to go out this way, and this was the reason for what happened to you, and that is what is the way of upbringing that brought her up. This was the reason for what happened to you.

القاضي: طب يا محمد امتي بقى حسيت ان مفيش فايده ونويت تقتل, امتي؟

محمد: هو بعد الموضوع ده جابولي بلطجية وكده وبعنتله بلطجية وبعنتلي انا كمان بلطجية, عشان تشيل ايديها من الاتفاق وان هما يخوفوني واسكت وابعده.

انا بقى كان في دماغي ان انا انتقم بس مش بالشكل ده, لقيت بعدها واحد ظابط داخل جاي يكلمني بيقولي انت لو ما بعدتش عن نيرة هجيبك, ولو ما بعدتش وشلت نفسك من الحوارات دي كلها أنا هجيبك وهلفلك قواضي وكده, الكلام ده كله على الفيس, وبعدها بيومين الفيس بتاعي اتقفل

القاضي: امتي فكرت في القتل يا محمد؟

محمد: فكرت في القتل بقى بعد كمية حاجات بقى اللي هو ...

القاضي: احكي لي على يوم لما طلعت من المحلة وجيت ازاي وعرفت ازاي بقى انها رايحة المنصورة في هذا اليوم؟

محمد: ما هو احنا بنروح الامتحان عادي

القاضي: كان في اتوبيس واقف وحمل وانت واقف مركبتش ليه؟ انت وصلت ١٠:١ ومركبتش غير ١٠:٢٠ غير لما هي جت..

محمد: لأ مش لما هي جت. أنا واصل ١٠:١٠ ولما وصلت الباص كان طلع . الباص اللي اتحرك بعدها كان ١٠:٣٠

القاضي: شفتها وهي بتركب فيه؟

محمد: لأ هي جاية راكبة, أنا معرفش انها بتركب فيه, ده أنا كنت ناوي .. قولت خلاص أنا هستناها وهي إيه وهي داخلة وكده وهي داخلة من البوابة. وكنت أتمنى بقول يا رب يعني تيجي متأخر أو أنا اللي أوصل متأخر واليوم يعدي وميحصلش حاجة, فببص بقى رايح أركب الباص, المفروض الباص اللي هو ١٠ ونص ده لقيتها موجودة فيه, بس,

وكنت جايب بقى السكنينة معايا قمت رايح ..

القاضي: يعني واخد السكنينة في اليوم ده ليه وانت رايح تمتحن؟

محمد: إيه؟

القاضي: واحد رايح امتحان واخد سكنينة ليه يا محمد؟

محمد: أنا شاربيها من ٣ ايام من قبل الامتحان

القاضي: طب مسيبتهاش ليه في البيت واخدها ليه المنصورة السكنينة؟

محمد: كانت بعنالي تهديد انها هتعمل فيا وكذا وكذا فأنا مش ضامن أي حد..

القاضي: يعني عشان تدافع عن نفسك

محمد: أدافع عن نفسي... وفي نفس الوقت جيت في اليوم ده قلت خلاص بقى لو حصل فرصة هانتقم بقى لنفسي وأخلص عليها. في اليوم ده بقى كانت جاية في الباص عمالة بقى تترياً بقى وعمالة تضحك.

القاضي: جوا الباص؟

Judge: Well, Muhammad, when did you feel that there was no use of all this and wanted to kill her?

Muhammad: After this talk we had, her father sent thugs to me, and so on. I sent thugs to him, and she sent me thugs, to scare me and to forget all about our agreement, and to shut up and move away.

I still had in my mind that I would take revenge, but not in this way. Then a police officer sent me a Facebook message, it was “if you don't stay away from Naira, I will get you”. Two days later, my Facebook was closed.

Judge: When did you think of killing her, Muhammad?

Muhammad: I thought about killing, and after several things, like.....

Judge: Tell me about the day when you left Mahalla and how did you know that she was going to Mansoura that day?

Muhammad: I had an exam that day

Judge: There was a bus station, and you were waiting, why didn't you get on the bus? You arrived at 10:01, and you didn't get in until 10:20.

Muhammad: No, the bus arrived at 10:10, and when I got into the bus, she was already in it. The bus that left after that was at 10:30

Judge: Did you see her getting in it?

Muhammad: No, she was already inside, I didn't know that she was inside. I wished and prayed to God that she would arrive late, or I am the one who arrives late, and the day shall pass and nothing happens, but I got in the same bus she got.

And I brought a knife with me, so I went.

Judge: Why did you take a knife with you when you were going to take an exam?

Mohammed: what?

Judge: Why did someone go to an exam and take a knife, Muhammad?

Muhammad: I bought it 3 days before the exam.

Judge: Why didn't you leave it at home, why did you take the knife to Mansoura?

Muhammad: She sent me a threat that she would hurt me, and so on. I was scared.

Judge: You took it to defend yourself.

Muhammad: I am defending myself... At the same time, I came on this day and said, It's over. If there is an opportunity, I will take revenge for my own sake and end her life. On this day, she was laughing at me and making fun of me.

Judge: Inside the bus?

محمد: جوا الباص فاتعصبت بقی واتضايقت بقی اللي هو انت تستاهلي بقی, كل شوية تبص, الباص احنا قاعدين ورا. الشباب بيبقوا قاعدين ورا والبنات قدام وكل شوية تكلم صاحبته اللي جنبها وتقوم تدير وتبص وتبص وتضحك وكده فانا بقی اتضايقت اللي هو انت ..

هي متعرفش ان انا معايا السكينة ولا حاجة .

خلاص بقی الطريقة بتاعها قفلتني اللي هو انت لو كنتي في حالك وانا كنت في..

القاضي: طيب يا محمد الباص بياخد وقت اد ايه من المحلة للمنصورة؟

محمد: نص ساعة مثلا

القاضي: في النص ساعة دي محاولتش تقول يعني ملوش لازمة وارجع يا واد بلاش قتل ولا حاجة

محمد: ما هو انا بحكيلك الفترة دي. الكلام ده كله في نص ساعة, اللي هو عمالة تتكلم واخدة جنبها.

القاضي: اللي هي منة ولا حد تاني؟

محمد: هي واحدة مسيبة شعرها زيها مش عارف هي مين

Muhammad: Yes, inside the bus, so I got nervous and upset. I said to myself: “You deserve what will happen to you”. Every once in a while, she was looking back at me and made fun of me. I was sitting behind her with the guys, and the girls were in the front, and every time she talked to her friend who was next to her, they looked back at me and laughed and that's how I got bothered...

She didn't know that I had a knife.

I said to myself “That's it, it's gonna be it” The way she used to make fun of me, provoked me. I mean if she kept silent I wouldn't.....

Judge: OK, Muhammad, how long does the bus take from Mahalla to Mansoura?

Muhammad: Almost, half an hour.

Judge: Within this time, you didn't try to tell yourself, there is no need to kill her, I will go back without killing her

Muhammad: I am telling you that during the whole half an hour she was making fun of me with her friend and talking about me.

Judge: Was she Menna or someone else?

Muhammad: She was a loose-haired girl like her. I did not know who she was.

هي عمالة تتكلم. كانت النص ساعة, أنا هقول ايه في نفسي بلاش ومش عارف ايه, وفي نفس الوقت هي عمالة تكلم اللي جنبها دي ويبيصوا ويضحكوا . هي متعرفش ان انا معايا السكينة واقول بلاش ومش عارف ايه. وفي نفس الوقت هي عمالة تكلم اللي هي جنبها دي ويبيصوا ويضحكوا ويتريقوا معرفش بيقلوا ايه؟ بس بمعرفتي مستنتج الكلام اللي هما بيقلوه وانا من قبل كده خلاص شاييل منك. حتى لو انا شاييل منك وانا مقرر وجيتي في يوم زي ده بقيتي في حالك وكده هتغاضي, لكن أن..

She kept talking for the whole half an hour, I told myself “Don't do anything” and so on, but she kept making fun of me and talking about me with the girl beside me. She didn't know that I had the knife, again I told myself not to do this. I didn't know what they were saying. But with my knowledge, I deduced what they were saying, and I was already bothered by her. Even if I was previously bothered by her and intended to do something on that day, she kept silent minding her own business I could have ignored the matter and... but you....

القاضي: يعني الحاجات اللي في الباص دي ضايقتك؟

محمد: ضايقتني . لو انا مقرر ولقيتها في حالها مبتعملش حاجة وانا مقرر مية في المية ايه اللي هيخليني احي جنب واحدة في حالها مبتعملش حاجة لكن انت انت السبب في كل ده . انت اللي مدمرة حياتي . المفروض بقى أنا اللي اقعد اضحك وانا اللي اقعد اتكلم وانا اللي اقعد اعمل . معملتش الكلام ده كله وانت اللي قاعدة بتعملي الكلام ده كله.

القاضي: طيب وصلتوا عند الجامعة ونزلتوا عند الجامعة. هي نزلت الاول ولا انت؟

محمد: ما هما البنات بينزلوا الأول,

القاضي: البنات بينزلوا الأول كويس , هي نزلت وبعدين انت نزلت. كلمتها؟ محاولتش تكلمها؟ تصالحها ولا حاجة؟

محمد: ما هو انا بقى لو كنت اتكلمت كان ممكن يحصل زي ما هي عملت في الكلية وتقول ده .. تتبلى عليا وانا كان معايا السكينة

Judge: So, what happened on the bus bothered you?

Muhammad: She bothered me. If I made up my mind to harm her but found her minding her own business, I could not have done anything, why should I harm a girl who is minding her own business, she was the reason for all this. She destroyed my life. I am the one who was supposed to be laughing and making fun of her, and I'm the one who was supposed to sit down and talk about her. I didn't do all this and she was the one who did all this.

Judge: OK, you arrived at the university, who came out of the bus first you or her?

Muhammed: The girls come out first.

Judge: The girls come down first, ok. She came out first and you were behind her. Did you try to talk to her or have a reconciliation with her?

Muhammad: If I had spoken, it would have happened, as she did in college, and said that I was trying to harass her and I already had the knife.

القاضي: طيب بدأت ضرب فيها ازاي يا محمد لما نزلت وانت نزلت وراها؟

محمد: مش فاكر بس.. كانت هي قدامي وانا ضربتها بالسكينة

القاضي: هل انت ندمان يا محمد على قتلها؟

محمد: ندمان طبعا لأن مكنتش حابب ان الموضوع يوصل لكده بس لو جيت للحق المفروض أمها هي اللي تتسأل عليها. هي السبب

Judge: OK, how did you start hitting her, Muhammad, when she went down and you went down after her?

Muhammad: I don't remember. She was in front of me and I hit her with the knife.

Judge: Do you regret killing her, Muhammad?

Muhammad: Of course, I regret it because I didn't want things to end up like this, but as a matter of fact, her mother should be the one to be asked about it. She is the reason behind....

القاضي: طب سيبك من المفروض واسمعي يا محمد. إيه مفهوم الحب عندك يا محمد؟ انت شايف الحب يبقى ازاي؟

محمد: بيتسم وينظر للأرض ويمسح العرق من على جبينه – بمفهوم إيه بالظبط؟

القاضي: انت شايف الحب ازاي؟ أنا بحب واحدة لازم يا أخدها يا أقتلها؟

محمد: لأ, الكلام ده كانوا بيقلوه أهلها

القاضي: لأ. أنا بسألك انت ..

محمد: ما هو اللي ببيقوا متجوزين بيبيبووا بعض مفيش الكلام ده,

Judge: Forget about it, and listen to me, Muhammad. What is the concept of love to you, Muhammad? How do you see love?

\_Mohammed smiles and looks at the ground and wipes the sweat from his forehead—

Mohammed: What do you mean exactly?

Judge: How do you see love? If I love a girl, she should be mine or I kill her?

Muhammad: No, this is what her family used to say

Judge: No. I am asking you.

Muhammad: Married couples leave each other. There is no such thing.

اللي يزعل ان انت تبقى كويس مع حد والحد ده يستغلك -يشرب ماء- اللي بيزعل وبيأثر في الواحد انت انت تبقى كويس مع حد ومعملتش معاه حاجة وحشة والحد ده هو اللي يستغلك ويضحك عليك الناس ويقل بيك ويهدلك وكده بس , انما الحب, قبلنا وبعدنا حبوا وحبوا عادي يعني

لو انا حاطط في دماغي كده كنت هعمل الموضوع ده من زمان..

القاضي: عايز تقول حاجة تاني يا محمد.

محمد: عايز اقول مفيش حاجة تبرر اللي انا عملته لكن كل واحد بيعدي على فترة في حياته بيبقى غصب عنه لكن الحق ان أهلها هما المفروض يتسأل عن الموضوع ده لأنهم هما السبب

Mohammed: The thing that gets you upset is that you are good with someone, and this one exploits you - he drinks water - the thing that gets you upset that the person

you're good with is the one who exploits you, bluffs you, underestimates you, humiliates you, but love.. people in the past and in the future normally can love.

If I had put it in my head to kill her, I would have done this a long time ago.

Judge: Do you want to say something else, Muhammad?

Muhammad: I want to say that there is no need to justify what I did, but every person goes through a period of his life that goes against his will, but the truth is that her family members are supposed to be asked about this issue because they are the reason.....