

## The Portrayal of Capitalism and Schadenfreude in Squid Game by Hwang Dong Hyuk: An Analysis of Societal Entertainment Dynamics

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### Abstract

Capitalism is a dominant economic system in many parts of the world, shaping societies, industries, and individuals' lives. Not only it has left its mark on the real world, but also on the realm of literature. Numerous novels and screen texts have explored capitalism as a central theme, triggering extensive research and analysis. However, much of this research is guided by viewing capitalism from new perspective, not just as a system that exploits workers by paying them less than the value of their physical labor. One popular series that has attracted considerable attention of the researchers is Squid Game. Yet, none of the studies have discussed the new satirical sense of capitalism as a way of entertainment. In Squid Game capitalists derive pleasure from the characters' display of fear, anxiety, and their willingness to risk their lives, essentially purchasing the opportunity to indulge in Schadenfreude. Remarkably, the characters in the game willingly sell their emotions and experiences rather than their physical labor. This research paper aims to focus on the presentation of capitalism in Squid Game as a form of entertainment while examining the associated capitalist Schadenfreude behavior. To analyze this phenomenon, the researchers will go with the familiar definitions of capitalism, alongside various critical and psychological definitions of Schadenfreude. By exploring this unique portrayal of capitalism in the context of entertainment, this research endeavors to shed light on the complex dynamics between capitalism, pleasure – seeking, and the commodification of human experiences.

**Key words:** Capitalism, Squid game, Schadenfreude.

الرأسمالية والمتعة في إيذاء الآخرين المتمثلة في لعبة الحبار لهوانغ دونغ هيوك: دراسة تحليلية لديناميكية الترفيه المجتمعي

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### الخلاصة

إن الرأسمالية نظام اقتصادي شائع الاستخدام حول العالم حيث أنه يسهم في سقل المجتمعات والصناعات وحياء الأفراد، ولم يقتصر تأثير هذا النظام الاقتصادي على العالم الواقعي، بل امتد أيضاً إلى مجال القصص الأدبية، إذ تناولت الكثير من الروايات والانتاجات السينمائية الرأسمالية كموضوع أساسي، لكن على الرغم من ذلك فإن الرأسمالية عرفت اقتصادياً وبشكل محدود على أنها نظام يستغل العمال من خلال دفعهم أجور أقل من قيمة عملهم البدني من دون اللجوء إلى العامل النفسي الناتج عن هكذا نظام. وفي مسلسل "لعبة الحبار" يستمد الرأسماليون المتعة من مشاهد خوف الشخصيات وقلقهم واستعدادهم للمخاطرة بحياتهم، حيث يشترون فعلياً فرصة المتعة بإيذاء الآخرين، ومن المثير للاهتمام أن الشخصيات في اللعبة تباع مشاعرها وتجاربها طواعية بدلاً من بيع عملها البدني، ويهدف هذه البحث على تقديم الرأسمالية في "لعبة الحبار" كنوع من أنواع الترفيه مع دراسة سلوك المتعة بإيذاء الآخرين المرتبط بالرأسمالية، وتحليل هذه الظاهرة يعتمد هذا البحث على التعريفات المألوفة للرأسمالية، بالإضافة إلى تعريفات نقدية ونفسية مختلفة لأسباب المتعة في إيذاء الآخرين، ومن خلال استكشاف هذا التصوير الفريد للرأسمالية في سياق الترفيه يسعى هذا البحث إلى تسليط الضوء على الديناميكيات المعقدة بين الرأسمالية، والسعي وراء المتعة، وتسليع التجارب الإنسانية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الرأسمالية، لعبة الحبار، المتعة في إيذاء الآخرين.

## Chapter one

### 1.1 Introduction

In many regions of the world, capitalism is the predominant economic system that shapes industries, society, and people's lives. It has not only had an impact on the material world but also on the literary world. The core issue of capitalism has been handled in a number of novels and movie texts, leading to a great deal of investigation and examination. But a lot of this study is motivated by seeing capitalism from different angles, not only as a system that underpays laborers for the physical labor they perform. Squid Game is one well – known series that has drawn a lot of interest from scholars. However, no study has addressed the contemporary satirical interpretation of capitalism as a kind of entertainment.

Capitalists in Squid Game take pleasure in the characters' expressions of fear, worry, and willingness to put their lives in danger; they are essentially buying the chance to experience Schadenfreude. Surprisingly, rather of selling their actual work, the game's characters willingly sell their feelings and experiences. This research paper will analyze the linked capitalist Schadenfreude behavior and concentrate on how capitalism is presented as a kind of amusement in Squid Game. The researchers will use well – known concepts of capitalism in conjunction with a range of critical and psychological definitions of Schadenfreude to examine this phenomenon. Through an examination of this distinctive representation of capitalism within the entertainment industry, this study aims to clarify the intricate

relationships between capitalism, the pursuit of pleasure, and the commercialization of human existence.

## 1.2 Problem

Most of the scholarly studies and academic papers are devoted to studying the current topic according to Marxist theories of Capitalism. That is to say, Capitalism is a system that took advantage of workers by paying them less than the value of their work. All of the made studies lack the exploration and analysis of the new satirical sense of capitalism as a form of entertainment in the TV series *Squid Game*. Previous studies have extensively examined capitalism regarding exploitation and the value of physical labor, but they have failed to address the unique portrayal of capitalism as a source of entertainment and the associated capitalist Schadenfreude behavior. Thus, this research paper highlights the need to investigate how capitalism is presented in *Squid Game* as a form of entertainment while examining the motivations and implications of the capitalist Schadenfreude behavior portrayed in the series.

## 1.3. Research Question

- 1- What is capitalism?
- 2- What is Schadenfreude?
- 3- How Capitalism and Schadenfreude behavior are reflected in *Squid Game*?

## 1.3. Aim

This study aims to examine how capitalism is depicted as a form of entertainment in the TV series *Squid Game* and to analyze the associated capitalist Schadenfreude behavior portrayed in the show. By utilizing what has been generally known on capitalism and incorporating various critical and psychological definitions of Schadenfreude, this research seeks to explore the presentation of capitalism as a source of entertainment in *Squid Game*. Through this analysis, the research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the evolving dynamics between capitalism, entertainment, and the portrayal of human emotions within contemporary popular culture.

## 1.4. Significant

This research holds significant implications for both academia and society at large. By exploring the portrayal of capitalism as a form of entertainment and examining the capitalist Schadenfreude behavior depicted in the TV series *Squid Game* this study addresses a notable gap in the existing literature. Furthermore, this research has societal implications by fostering critical discourse on the consequences of capitalism as a source of entertainment. It encourages a reflection on the ethical dimensions of commodifying human experiences and the potential impact on an individual's well – being. The significance of this research lies in its contribution to scholarly knowledge, its potential to influence cultural and media practices, and its capacity to stimulate critical dialogue about the complex

interplay between capitalism, entertainment, and the human experience in contemporary society.

### 1.5. Limitations

This study is limited by the selection of Squid Game as the primary source of analysis, potentially limiting the generalizability of the research to other TV shows or forms of entertainment. Moreover, the research's scope is limited to the analysis of capitalism as entertainment and Schadenfreude behavior, potentially overlooking other relevant factors or dimensions.

## Chapter Two

### 2.1. General Understanding on Capitalism

The term 'capitalism' has been used by economists to indicate certain modes of production, their ownership, and their objective behind production. Thus, it is originated as an economic system that includes private ownership of the means of production, which leads to income generation and ultimately, profit – making through the production of certain goods and services (Atri, 2021 p.166). One of the key features of capitalism is making money or maximizing profit. All businesses in this system exist to increase the wealth of the owners. This is done by minimizing the production cost and maximizing the sale of the produced goods (Atri, 2021 p.168).

The means of production are owned by a minority group or the bourgeoisie class, those with no control over such resources have only their own time and labour as a resource for earning a livelihood. The latter section or the proletariat is the majority of the society, which sells off their labor for a wage in the production process, under capitalism. Although the labourers are not legally bound to work in the production units, unlike the slaves or serfs of the feudal system, they work owing to their sheer financial compulsions (Atri, 2021 p.169).

Large – scale industrial interests in mining, agribusiness, and manufacturing have been the foundation of twentieth – century capitalist industrialization, which has supported the idea that workers were an emancipatory force. The mass concentration of labourers in these large – scale enterprises has paved the way for the development of trade unions, which in turn sparked campaigns to raise pay and improve working conditions, as well as the growth of class consciousness and common interests. Since they directly contested the processes of capital accumulation and surplus value extraction, struggles at the point of production has become a reflection of structural power. As Fordist mass production techniques proliferated during the 20th century, labour groups' negotiating leverage grew. Between the British fight to limit working hours in 1847 and the mid – 1900s social compact, when "the political economy of the [capitalist] class succumbed to the political economy of the working class", they were able to win both workplace rights and social citizenship entitlements (Marx, 1864).



According to Marx, Capitalism, is marked by extreme economic discrepancies, which is also translated into the social arrangement of society. While the means of production are owned by a minority group or the bourgeoisie class, those with no control over such resources have only their own time and labour as a resource for earning livelihood (Atri, 2021 p.168). under capitalism, money is first used to purchase a commodity, which is further sold to create more money. According to Marx, the capitalist objective of this form of exchange is to generate greater sums of money (Atri, 2021 p.168).

As thus, one of the central cores of the capitalist dynamic is capitalist exploitation. However, conceptually capitalist exploitation is merely a particular form of exploitation, which is a much more comprehensive concept. Indeed, almost any generic definition of exploitation applies to the relationship between slaves and masters in antiquity or between serfs and lords in the Middle Ages. Furthermore, exploitation, even within the capitalist system, also occurs outside of capitalist productive processes. For example, traditional patriarchal exploitation in the home or the exploitation of illegally enslaved workers. We must, therefore, define the general concept of exploitation and then distinguish the particular features of capitalist exploitation (Zuckerfeld, 2017, p.115).

According to what has been explained, it could be said that capitalism is an economic system in which private individuals or businesses own and control the mean of production, distribution and exchange of goods and services. In capitalist system individuals are free to own a property, start business and compete with one another. prices are determined by supply and demand and profits are invested into the economy for further growth. Carl Marx has seen capitalism as a system that exploited workers and concentrated in the hands of few capitalists. Workers depends on material condition to survive. In order to survive, workers got to have the ability to exchange, which means, labor, if they don't own the means of production. Capitalist who owns those means of production offers money in return of labor. The capitalist will take every means of people production and give some money which represent much less of what the workers produced. (Karl, M. 1887. pp. 150 – 154)

## 2.2. Schadenfreude

The term comes from the joining the two words, “schaden” which means “harm” and “freude” meaning “joy”, and it indeed refers to the pleasure derived from another person's misfortune (H. Richard, 2013, p. 30). In more detailed words, Schadenfreude, is an emotion characterized by experiencing pleasure or joy at the misfortune or failure of others. It is often observed in competitive contexts and is triggered by factors such as self – evaluation threats and low self – esteem (Van Dijk, Ouwerkerk, et al., 2011; Van Dijk, Van Koningsbruggen, et al., 2011).

The research has shown that schadenfreude can be a result of downward social comparisons, where individuals compare themselves to others who are experiencing misfortune (Smith, 2000). This emotion represents one of the possible outcomes of such comparisons, alongside negative emotions like worry and pity. The joy evoked by schadenfreude is particularly evident when observing another person's misfortune in competitive situations (Smith, 2013; Smith et al., 2009).

Observing someone else's suffering may fulfil basic human needs and impact various aspects of self-perception. For example, it may increase an individual's self – esteem by providing feedback on their social competence or adequacy compared to the person facing misfortune. In competitive settings, the misfortunes of others might also enhance feelings of control or power over events and their social environment. Additionally, witnessing the failure of a competitor may foster a sense of social connection compared to the victim of the setback. Lastly, observing another individual's misfortune may lead to a heightened sense of purpose or meaning in life, as it reinforces the feeling of one's own life being more relevant or significant (Brambilla & Riva, 2017, p. 401).

The primacy of the self – interests in competitive situations and its keen preference for superiority over inferiority ensure a place for schadenfreude in our repertoire of feelings. (H. Richard, 2013, p.19). To feel one's well – being stronger when the misfortune of other people is put under the self – wellbeing like a background to set it into brighter light, is founded in nature according to the laws of the imagination, namely that of contrast (H. Richard, 2013, Ep. 20). As much as inferiority makes the person feels bad, superiority makes him/her feels good. (H. Richard, 2013, p. 21).

Social comparisons not only help tell people whether they are succeeding or failing, but they also help explain the cause of their success or failure. If they “fail” because most people are performing better than they are, they infer low ability; if they “succeed” because most people do worse than they do, people infer high ability. Social comparisons deliver a double influence by defining whether a performance is a success or a failure and by suggesting that the cause probably results from high or low ability. No wonder misfortunes happening to others can be pleasing. They increase our relative fortunes and upgrade people' self – evaluations. It is worth stressing how much social comparisons can contribute to defining the talents and abilities. (H. Richard, 2013, p. 23).

Superiority in others often decreases people self – esteem, but their inferiority provides a boost, especially in competitive circumstances (H. Richard, 2013, p. 25). Humans have always lived in groups, and the individual survival has probably been linked with the advantages of being part of a strong group. Group identification is therefore quite automatic and can lead to ingroup favoritism and outgroup

antipathy – and schadenfreude when a rival outgroup suffers (H. Richard, 2013, p. 61).

The emotions often produced by intergroup relations may also encourage extreme forms of conflict, such as ethnic and religious strife and wars between nations. In this sense, schadenfreude, as natural as it is to feel, may be a kind of gateway drug, closing the door on compassion and encouraging darker emotions and actions (H. Richard, 2013, p. 63).

Predator may help the human being feels better about him/herself, but this is through another person's extreme humiliation (H. Richard, 2013, Ep. 109). Over time, and in many different places, when it comes to making ourselves happy, humans have long relied on the humiliations and failures of other people (Smith. T, 2018, p.10).

Today, Schadenfreude is all around people. it is there in the way they do politics, how they treat celebrities, in online fail videos. But these heady pleasures are shot through with unease. Moralists have long despised Schadenfreude. The philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer called it “an infallible sign of a thoroughly bad heart and profound moral worthlessness”, the very worst trait in human nature (Smith. T, 2018, p. 12). Schadenfreude has variously been called the “absence of empathy”, the “opposite of empathy” and “empathy's shadow”, casting the two as fundamentally incompatible. (Smith. T, 2018, p. 17)

People love sharing anecdotes about horrifying physical predicaments – the more outrageous, the more awe and revulsion they provoke, the better. There is giddy surprise in bodies misbehaving, as discussed in the previous chapter. But also, surely, alongside this surprise is a little twinge of superiority. (Smith. T, 2018, ep. 32). One of the reasons Schadenfreude can seem so nasty is that this feeling of power at the expense of someone else's physical pain and clumsiness may tempt us to enjoy ever more ghoulish sights (Smith. T, 2018, ep. 32).

Many came to believe people excitement at scenes of death and destruction have been a vestige lingering from their more violent pasts. “If evolution and the survival of the fittest be true at all”, wrote the psychologist William James in 1890, “the destruction of prey and human rivals must have been among the most important of man's primitive functions, the fighting and the chasing instincts must have become ingrained”, and so inflicting violence or seeing an enemy mangled or destroyed would have become “intensely pleasurable”. (Smith. T, 2018, ep. 34).

schadenfreude has been regarded as a moral wrong and an emotion to be avoided. It has, for example, been described as a disguised expression of aggression as fiendish, diabolical, and an “infallible sign of a thoroughly bad heart and profound moral worthlessness” as a malicious and immoral feeling (Van Dijk & Ouwerkerk, 2014, p.18). In other words, people can enjoy the misfortunes of others because it provides them with social comparison benefits and these satisfy their concern for a

positive self – evaluation. A concern for a positive self – evaluation can explain why people who are momentarily threatened in their self – evaluation, or those who have low self – esteem, tend to experience more schadenfreude toward the misfortunes of others (Van Dijk & Ouwerkerk, 2014, p.23)

More specifically, the researchers argue that the misfortunes of others can be pleasing because these provide people with opportunities to protect, maintain, or enhance a positive self – view (Van Dijk & Ouwerkerk, 2014, p.148). They say that (at least part of) the pleasure in schadenfreude stems from the social comparison benefits provided by the misfortunes of others. (Van Dijk & Ouwerkerk, 2014, p.149).

Social comparisons will elicit strong emotions when they are directly relevant to a person's goals, motives, or concerns. In terms of social comparison theories, comparison processes occur more easily and have more impact when people are confronted with another person's performance or outcomes in a domain that is important and relevant to the self. schadenfreude should be most intense when a misfortune happens to a close other in a self – relevant domain. Examples of social constructs that might serve as a meaningful basis for closeness are gender, nationality, religion, social status, or family membership. (Van Dijk & Ouwerkerk, 2014, p.149).

Arguably, these misfortunes provide the best opportunities to enhance one's self – evaluation and therefore elicit strong positive feelings. These findings underscore the importance of the relevance of both the social comparison other and the social comparison domain in the experience of schadenfreude. Moreover, these findings are in line with the notion that schadenfreude is more intense when social comparison benefits are larger. More specifically, a misfortune happening to a close other in a self – relevant domain should be especially pleasing when this misfortune highlights one's own advantages rather than disadvantages and thereby provides an opportunity to enhance one's self – evaluation (Van Dijk & Ouwerkerk, 2014, p.150).

low self – esteem people experience a stronger self – threat when confronted with a high – achiever, and this self – threat in turn increases their schadenfreude. In addition, studies demonstrate that people experience more schadenfreude toward an out – group when they identify more strongly with their intergroup, schadenfreude is most intense when the social comparison context is more relevant to one's collective self (Van Dijk & Ouwerkerk, 2014, p.157).

Competition with outgroup members for limited resources, like employment opportunities, leads to increased negative feelings and a reduced willingness to help the outgroup. This theory implies that people may be especially likely to ignore a competitor needing help (Baren, 2017, p. 21). Generally, people feel more schadenfreude after learning of a competitor's hardship (Baren, 2017, p. 37).



Reactions toward a competitor would generally be more negative (e.g., more schadenfreude and less empathy, personal distress, and helping) (Baren, 2017, p. 42).

In summary, schadenfreude is the experience of pleasure at others' misfortune, especially in competitive situations. It can be triggered by self – evaluation threats and low self – esteem and may result from downward social comparisons. This emotion has psychological consequences on self-image and impacts social relations, making it an intriguing topic of study that connects with theories of basic psychological needs (Brambilla & Riva, 2017).

### **2.3. Squid game by Hwang Dong Hyuk**

Squid Game centers around 456 financially struggling contestants, including a North Korean defector and a fund manager accused of embezzlement, who compete for a staggering prize of 45.6 billion won (\$38.66 million). Since its debut on September 17, the horror series has gained immense popularity, becoming the first Korean drama to top Netflix's charts in the United States. Netflix's Co – Chief Executive, Ted Sarandos, believes it has the potential to become the platform's most popular show globally (Cha, 2021).

The show, which is created by South Korean director and screenwriter Hwang Dong – hyuk, portrays a dystopic horror where desperate participants, facing severe financial hardship, are lured into deadly tournaments involving twisted children's games like tug of war and marbles. While praised by viewers and critics for its gripping storyline, the series has also drawn attention to its graphic and brutal violence (De Ferrer, 2021).

Squid Game touches on themes similar to the Oscar – winning film "Parasite", exploring the profound financial disparity within South Korean society. The show's advantage lies in its worldwide release with an English – dubbed version, allowing broader accessibility to international audiences. In contrast, some foreign – language series, such as the popular French comedy "Call My Agent", are only available with subtitles. The English dubbing likely contributed to Squid Game's success, helping it reach a wider viewership (De Ferrer, 2021).

The plot of the show is involving around different parties which are represented within the story ground using characters where each character group are seeking advantages from the other. The three main parties or groups are classified according to different colors each color identify a certain class; The black, red and green. The black dressed party represent that class of power, control, dominion, and financial providers. The red represents the security or guard class which works as propaganda of the last and their task is to keeps things in place and order. The green dressed party are extremely poor, homeless people chosen by the black party to compete each other by playing a game in a return of money. Every time one of the green dressed dies during the game, the black adds extra amount of money to

those who comes out of the competition alive, as thus the very last survivor will gain huge amount of money.

The game is taken place in an isolated island in a very secretive place especially made for the purpose of this game which is about hidden antitreatment business deal held by black dressed party and very rich people who are ready to pay huge amount of money just to watch behind a big glass, gambling, on live the competitors living and death while they are escalating the game levels. Knowing the game rules and deathly restrictions, the green party agrees with free will to stay and play risking their own life for the sake of money.

### Chapter Three

#### Application and Analysis

In many regions of the world, capitalism has dominated the economic system, influencing societies, industries, and people's daily lives. It has not only left its mark on the literary world, but also on the real world. The present research is going to examine a new satirical sense of capitalism exploitation as a way of entertainment on a widespread series that has drawn the interest from the researchers naming Squid Game (2021).

The series is satirical reflection of the capitalist communities and its exploitation, where capitalism is being portrayed in deeper horizon with the application of Schadenfreude. In Squid Game, the characters' displays of fear, anxiety, pain, death, live and readiness to take risks are enjoyed by the capitalist authorities, who essentially pay for the chance to engage in Schadenfreude. Surprisingly, the characters with free choice agrees to be the toys for entertaining the capitalist group. Thus, this chapter is going to examine how Squid Game portrays capitalism as a kind of entertainment and the corresponding capitalist Schadenfreude behavior.

#### 3.1. Capitalism and Schadenfreude in *Squid Game*

The first episode of *squid game*, shows the miserable life of the main character, Gi – Hun who is divorced, jobless, drown with debts and has no way to collect money except gambling. In the second episode, Gi – Hun and many lifeless persons have been freely picked up by very secretive business owner to be involved in set of games in isolated island. In the third episode, the rule of the game is being reviled and the deal is that; the players will compete each other to win the game and they will be given an amount of money every time one of them get killed, as thus the last survivor of them all will collect a very huge amount of money. Its notable that each side within this game is being identified using specific colors; The players, will be dressed in green, the business owners are dressed in black, the VIPs are dressed in gold, and those who maintain and control any disruption during the games are dressed in red.

The seventh episode, reveals the essence from this whole game, which is taking pleasure by watching the players fighting each other not only for their lives but killing each other in return of money. The VIPs will pay this business owners larger amount of money as long as the show is pleasant. They will be sitting and served in especial room full with large screens where the players are being watched and judged secretly. The more the players are suffering the more it is pleasant to look at.

The first impression after watching squid game is its clear hierarchy and class classifications. Looking at the class structure within the series a clear mimic to any capitalist community can be noticed. Hierarchy in squid game is mainly made of four classes in which can be defined through clothes coloring as its previously mentioned. The first class who wears black are capitalist resemblance. The black class naming capitalist, own their business by dragging people in need and out of street and offer them huge amount of money for especial labor. The black dressed class own the means of production of this game which is player pain and suffering?? The players have only their own pain, suffering and humiliation as a resource for earning livelihood. The player emotions and feelings are further sold out to Schadenfreudic VIPs riches to create more money.

The commodity is the workers themselves and their production is their mental and physical pain. Ironically speaking, the labore lives and pain are the sense of production in which it goes to capitalist ego satisfaction. The more the player suffers and die the more money capitalist being provide by the VIPs.

But unlike any other capitalist societies, the players have been given free choice to be slaved and kill each other for money. Ironically, the capitalist authorities do not take money from the players, but on the contrary, they provide them with huge amount of money just to have fun seeing them fighting for their life or kill each other. In this way they economically attract much wealthier schadenfreudic VIPs who are willing to pay just to feel the pleasure when the players are suffering.

It has been identified in chapter two that schadenfreude refers to the pleasure of others. The seventh episode of Squid game, reveals how VIPs are experiencing pleasure at the misfortune and failure of the players. Observing the players suffering through the large screens fulfil the basic VIPs needs and aspects of self – perception. VIPs are increasing their self – esteem by providing themselves with their social competence who are the misfortunate players.

In such competitive situation, the misfortunes of the players enhance VIPs feelings of control or power over the minimized world watched over screen and their social environment. Witnessing the failure of players foster a sense of social connection compared to the victim of the setback. Observing the players misfortune lead to a heightened VIPs a sense and give them purpose and meaning in life. The misfortunes happening to the players increase the VIPs relative fortunes and

upgrade their self – evaluations. Significantly the VIPs are all wearing predatory animals' masks which emphasizes Schadenfreude predatory sense. VIPs appearance as predators helps them to feel better about themselves, which is through players extreme humiliation.

In episode one, minute 32:04 when a group of people hiding their faces, whose true reality will be revealed at the end of the series, appeared watching the players through the cameras. those people who are keeping an eye on the players resemble the social norms or the undesigned rules made by people,

What proves more the mentioned above is the end of this series, episode 9, which shows the last game, game number 6 and what happens after the end of the whole games and after the winner taking his money. It shows the truth and the reason for creating this minimal government and creating such games. So, the reality is that player number 1, who is an old man, is actually the founder of this idea. He is actually a rich man, and because of feeling bored at work, he and his colleagues decide to create such games and to get rid of this routine. Yet, they make everything under the name of equality, justice, helping poor people, and saving the human beings from the brutality of the world.

To conclude, this minimal government takes the freedom from its citizens and enslaves them which is the essence of capitalism.

In the other hand schadenfreude is to be tackled in depth as we see in episode one, minute 20:43, the idea of this concept is obvious as the first competition has started which is between one of the staff or the founders of the games and a poor man who will be one of the players later. The competition happens when the that man proposes Seyung Gi Hun, the poor man, to play a simple game and if he wins, he will get a sum of money. The opposite will happen if he loses. So, at the beginning Seyung Gi Hun loses, but instead of giving money, because he does not have it; so, that man tells him that he can use his body to pay. Thus, he begins to slap Seyung Gi Hun each time he wins over him. So, the point is here, when that man slaps Seyung Gi Hun, he feels happy and satisfied as he sees that poor man suffers, has a pain and he stands it only because he needs money. That is how the Schadenfreude works; when that man enjoys slapping the poor man and he feels that he has the power over him.

episode 7 the arrival of the guests who also hide their faces with masks of animal shapes. A party has been made for the guests, and they just laugh and make fun of the players as they watch them. They gamble on who will win at the end of each game, and they are amused by watching one player kills the other especially in the last game when only two players remain. They believe that a person can kill the closest person to him/ her and by his/her will only to win. In the series, these two players are close friends, yet at the end, they fight each other and try to kill each other, which is the core of this concept, destroying the social relations.



## Chapter four

### Conclusion

The exploration of the TV series *Squid Game* within this research highlighted the intricate interplay between capitalism and Schadenfreude, revealing how the show serves as a satirical portrayal of capitalist exploitation transformed into a form of entertainment. Through its depiction of a dystopian society where individuals voluntarily engage in life – threatening games for financial gain, *Squid Game* illustrated the extreme consequences of a capitalist system where human lives were commodified for the amusement and profit of the elite.

The analysis demonstrated that *Squid Game* had mirrored real – world capitalist dynamics, emphasizing the stark class divisions and the exploitation of the vulnerable by those in power. The characters' willingness to participate in the deadly games reflected the desperation and lack of alternatives faced by those oppressed by capitalist systems. Meanwhile, the pleasure derived by the elite spectators from the suffering and death of the contestants epitomized the concept of capitalist Schadenfreude, where the misfortune of others became a source of joy and entertainment.

This research contributed to the broader discourse on capitalism by expanding the traditional focus on economic exploitation to include the psychological and emotional dimensions of capitalist practices as depicted in popular culture. It underscored the importance of understanding how capitalism not only affected material conditions but also shaped human emotions and behaviors, turning suffering into a spectacle for profit.

In conclusion, *Squid Game* offered a powerful critique of capitalism by presenting it as a system that thrives on exploitation and dehumanization, where the boundaries between reality and entertainment blur. The series invited viewers to reflect on the ethical implications of a society that commodifies human experiences and the potential dangers of allowing such a system to dictate the terms of people's lives. By examining the portrayal of capitalism and Schadenfreude in *Squid Game*, this research shed light on the darker aspects of contemporary society, urging a reevaluation of the values and priorities that drive our world.

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