



Analysis of *Nero's* Insecurities in the *Devil May Cry* Series

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Abstract

In the entirety of human life, the feeling of insecurity has always occurred, even in fictional works. However, little is known about the study of insecurity in a character in a video game series. Therefore, this study is to analyze the insecurity of Nero, a protagonist of the Devil May Cry series gives insights on what are the causes and the types of his insecurities, and finds the true nature of Nero's insecurity and how he deals with it. Data for the study comprised psychological research on insecurity and its causes, as well as the story of Nero. The data were transcribed and analyzed in qualitative research. The findings revealed that Nero developed his insecurities ever since he was left alone at the orphanage doorstep, being bullied by other children, the death of his adoptive brother, and being insulted by his mentor. As such, Nero develops the tendencies of being impulsive and brash whenever people he loved are in danger, as well as being arrogant and rebellious. Furthermore, the study revealed that there are two ways for Nero to cope with his insecurities, namely seeking for more power to protect the people he loved, and to seek the validation from said people. Through this, Nero believed in himself he is indeed capable of saving other people.

Keywords: Characterization, Devil May Cry, Game Series, Inferiority Complex, Insecurities

Introduction

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, insecurity is “a feeling of lacking confidence and not being sure of your own abilities or of whether people like you”. With that being said, insecurity is the feeling of not having enough confidence in oneself, whether that be their own persona and abilities, or even how others perceive them. Maslow (1942) described an insecure person as a person who “perceives the world as a threatening jungle and most human beings as dangerous and selfish.” He argues that insecurity feels like being rejected, isolated, anxious, pessimistic, and unhappy. An insecure person always shows signs of never-ending wanting for security, with a common example being wanting to prove their worthiness to other people that they are very capable in something. With these in mind, insecurity refers to the feeling of wanting acceptance of themselves, in order to be a part of the community.



Insecurity is related to philosophy. Philosophy is a critical rational issue that inquires about existential human concerns. Asike (2017) views that philosophy involves the clarification of concepts and understanding of life. It removes the ambiguity and vagueness in our ontology as mankind. Thus, with this in question, it will find reason in revealing the ambiguity in religious doctrines which may be harmful to society. Therefore, philosophy is the rational scrutiny of religious claims, and it critically examines the exigency of overzealous religious inhibitions in human existence. Proper knowledge of philosophy will help people to critically examine and evaluate religious doctrines and abstain from actions that are injurious, for example, the insecurities in humanity's lives. Insecurity can happen on many occasions: childhood trauma, the victim of bullying, problems in the family, feeling abandoned, and physical attributes. Chaudhary (2022) views that there are eight most common causes of insecurity, which are lack of confidence, past traumatic experiences, extreme emotional dependence, trust issues that also are the root causes of insecurity, childhood experiences, personal insecurities that include body image issues, fear of failure, and abuses that can trigger patterns of insecurity. The heterogeneity of insecure individuals can be attributed to the fact that there exist various modes of experiencing and expressing insecurity, thereby giving rise to inter-individual differences.

In relation to that, the most common types of insecurity are relationship insecurity, social insecurity, body image insecurity, job insecurity, and basic need insecurity. Delgado (2021), a psychologist, states that insecurity is a deeply personal experience, so there are as many types of insecurities as there are people. She divides insecurity into five types, insecurity in interpersonal relationships which deals with the difficulty to express one's emotions and being afraid of intimacy, social insecurity which deals with the tendency to avoid social contexts, body insecurity which deals with the nonacceptance of oneself appearance, professional insecurity that deals with the feeling of not having the knowledge or skills to do the job successfully, and personal insecurity that deals with the reflection of unresolved internal conflicts.

The authors found the data on people's insecurity based on psychological research to better help understand insecurity. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) shows a report of a growing sense of insecurity among people despite years of development growth prompting calls for solidarity and refocusing development efforts (n.d.). Based on the report, about six in seven people worldwide are plagued by feelings of insecurity. New data and analysis in the report, *New Threats to Human Security in the Anthropocene*, shows that people's sense of safety and security is at a low in almost every country, including the richest countries, despite years of upwards development success. Those benefiting from some of the highest levels of good health, wealth, and education outcomes are reporting even greater anxiety than 10 years ago. The authors are aware that some types of insecurity are manifested in some video games, for instance, the Devil May Cry series. Devil May Cry series is a hack-and-slash horror fantasy video game series that involves a half demon half man hunting and slaying every demon from the world. The series has five entries, such as Devil May Cry (2001), Devil May Cry 2 (2003), Devil May Cry 3 (2005), Devil May Cry 4 (2008), and Devil May Cry 5 (2019). For the sake of the research, the authors chose the entries of Devil May Cry 4 and Devil May Cry 5 as the source research.

The authors find Devil May Cry 4 and Devil May Cry 5 interesting for the topic of the research because the character Nero is the main subject of this research. Nero is one of the main protagonists of the video game series. He first appeared in Devil May Cry 4, and then in Devil May Cry 5. Nero grew up in Fortuna city and trained to be a Holy Knight from the Order of the Sword, a religious group that fights to



protect the world from demons. It is revealed later that the Order is conspiring to conquer the world using demonic powers. After defecting from the Order, Nero became a vigilante demon hunter that chases after the mysterious figure (later revealed to be his own biological father Vergil in the end) who severed his right arm.

In order to understand more about the relationship between Nero and his insecurity, the authors briefly explain scenes from the video game that contributes to Nero's insecurities. Nero failed to save his adoptive brother, Credo, and ever since doubted his own abilities to save the people he cares about. Insecurity about one ability or skill oneself is one of the common types of insecurity. By letting Credo die, Nero doesn't have the confidence to protect others. In Devil May Cry 5, Nero once again was attacked by his insecurity when the man he idolizes, Dante, told him to retreat and called him "deadweight". Furthermore, this study hopefully enriches the psychological study of Nero's insecurities, gives insights on what are the causes and the types of his insecurities and finds the true nature of Nero's insecurity and how he deals with it.

Literature Review

Insecurity in Psychology

Insecurity is the feeling of not having confidence in one's own abilities and persona, and will always affect how others perceive them in their own mind. Based on psychological views, insecurity means the feeling of perceiving the world as a threatening jungle, the constant feeling of being rejected, isolated, anxious, pessimistic, and unhappy (Maslow, 1942). Therefore, a feeling of insecurity is a feeling that is always wanting security.

Causes of Insecurity

According to Chaudhary (2022), insecurity can be caused by eight occurrences, such as lack of confidence, past traumatic experiences, extreme emotional dependence, trust issues, childhood experiences, personal insecurities, fear of failure, and abuses. This theory is supported by a psychologist named Pandey as the expert validator, as follows:

Lack of confidence

A lack of confidence or low self-esteem is one of the root causes of insecurity. This would lead a person to feel no value in themselves and believe that society also views them that way.

Past traumatic experiences

Traumatic experiences in the past could build insecurities in people. Moreover, a person will project the form of insecure behavior if they have experienced the feeling of being ignored, cheated, or unloved.

Extreme emotional dependence



This type of insecurity can be seen when a person expects too much from their partner. A feeling of dread and anxiety are the common traits of this insecurity.

Trust issues

Trust issues are another common underlying cause of insecurity. Usually, this type of insecurity comes from the betrayal of one's trust from their closest people. Of course, after being betrayed, the affected person will struggle to build trust again.

Childhood experiences

A person's behavior stems from what they experienced as a kid. If the person is extremely insecure, it can be traced back to one's younger days or childhood experiences. For example, the person might suffer trauma at the hand of their toxic parents.

Personal insecurities

Not being comfortable with one's appearance is also one of the most causes of insecurities. The affected person will perceive that people are disgusted by their physical appearance, and thus will never be satisfied with their own body.

Fear of failure

One of the underlying causes of insecurity is the fear of failure. This insecurity type usually happens in the family of overachievers. As such, the affected person always never feels enough of their achievement and sets their standard very high.

Abuses

Abuse is probably the most dangerous cause of insecurity. If a person suffers physical or emotional abuse, their spirit may break and eventually change the way they view themselves. This would make them very insecure in every aspect of life.

Methodology

This study concentrates on analyzing the insecurity in the character of Nero, thus a qualitative method was used in this research study. Bogdan & Biklen (1998) stated qualitative research is a research procedure that analyzes the generated descriptive data in the form of the written word or spoken of people and behavior that can be observed. Therefore, the descriptive qualitative approach was used in this research study to analyze the insecurity of Nero in the Devil May Cry series. The data source of this study is a video game character named Nero from the Devil May Cry Series. He is a half-human half-demon who is a demon hunter. Nero was chosen as the data for some reasons. First, he is a choleric person whose emotions can get the better of him and is easily overcome by his insecurities. Second, Nero has insecurities regarding his own self-worth and abilities. Third, Nero's traumatic experiences developed into the insecurities that always haunted him.



Data analysis is a process of inspecting and analyzing data with the goal of discovering useful information. Miles and Huberman (1994) described three activities in analyzing qualitative data, namely, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Thus, the process of analyzing the data is described below:

Data Reduction

Data reduction was the first step to analyze the data needed. The researcher transcribed the data from the videos and gameplay into written form. Additionally, several data were also collected from the official novel.

Data Display

In this step, the author analyzed the data that have been collected from the source material. The data were analyzed based on the theories of insecurity to find the relation between Nero and his insecurity. Those data were categorized into two categories: causes of Nero's insecurity and the types of it. Furthermore, some of the data analysis were displayed in the findings and discussion section.

Drawing Conclusion

After the data were analyzed and categorized based on the theory of insecurities, therefore the data were evaluated by relating such data to some previous studies. Thus, the data were concluded in order to get the implications and final points. Therefore, the analyzed data will be explained further in the finding and discussion.

Findings and Discussion

Nero's background in life

Nero is described as the deuteragonist of the Devil May Cry franchise. He is the son of Vergil and the nephew of Dante. Like them, Nero is depicted as having white hair and wearing a long coat. However, Nero's right arm is very different from a normal man's arm, as it is a demonic arm. It is indicated in the quotation below.

"I removed the bandages wrapped tightly around it, revealing hard, armorlike scales, which definitely didn't belong on human skin." (Morihashi, Deadly Fortune 1, 2009, p. 17).

In the quotation above, Nero's right arm is depicted as having hard scales that resemble armor, apart from normal human skin. In relation to this, Nero himself didn't know why his right arm transformed into a demon's arm. Nero thought that his arm has transformed ever since the incident occurred a month ago, as stated below.

"... and just like that it meant Kyrie was out of the immediate danger zone. But that put me right in the path of the creature's claws, ... Instantly, my arm exploded in sharp, intense pain." (Morihasi, Deadly Fortune 1, 2009, p. 50).



The statement above described how Nero gained his demonic right arm. It is stated that Nero's right hand exploded after taking the hit to protect his head from the demon's attack. Nero recklessly took the hit because he didn't want Kyrie injured by demons. This shows that Nero is prone to be impulsive when his loved ones are in danger.

Nero's social relationship

Social Relationship between Nero, Credo, and Kyrie

Nero was adopted by Kyrie and Credo's parents when he was a little boy. Ever since, Nero considered Kyrie and Credo as his own sister and brother, as stated below.

"...the only reason we were so close in the first place was that her parents liked me enough to adopt me, and raised us together like siblings." (Morihasi, *Deadly Fortune 1*, 2009, p. 246).

The quotation above states that Nero has a close relationship with his adoptive siblings since they are raised together in a family. In relation to this, Nero also has another reason why he is so close to Kyrie, as stated below.

"She's a really important person to me - not just because we were raised as family, or because her parents were kind to me. I have feelings for her." (Morihasi, *Deadly Fortune 1*, 2009, p. 247).

The statement above states that Nero indeed has feelings for his adoptive sister, for she was the closest person to Nero ever since.

Social Relationship between Nero and Dante

Dante is the uncle of Nero, as he is the brother of his father. The relationship between Nero and Dante started by enemies into a mentor and pupil bond. Nero first met Dante during the sermon of Sanctus in the Festival of Blade, as shown below.

Figure 1

Nero Duels Dante (Devil May Cry 4, 2008)



As shown in the image above, Nero fought Dante after the latter assassinated Sanctus and nearly killed Credo and Kyrie. Because of this, Nero only viewed Dante as a demon that tried to hurt his family, and he



intended to capture Dante. However, after Nero discovered the conspiracy of the Order, Nero teamed up with Dante to take down the Order, as shown below.

Figure 2

Dante Allows Nero to Keep Yamato (Devil May Cry 4, 2008)



As shown above, Nero and Dante formed a friendship and the latter accepted Nero into his demon-hunting gig. From this friendship, Nero views Dante as a mentor.

Social Relationship between Nero and Vergil

Vergil is Nero's long-lost biological father. The father and son reunited in Devil May Cry 5, although they weren't aware of their familial bond. Vergil divided his demonic and human sides into Urizen and V. During the course of the game, Nero formed a friendship with V to defeat Urizen after Dante was presumed dead fighting the demon king. Below is the bond between Nero and V.

Figure 3

Nero and V Parting Ways (Devil May Cry 5, 2019)



As shown above, Nero and V have formed a friendship bond. They both formed strategies and slayed many demons on their journey to Urizen's throne. At some point, V believed that Nero was the key to defeating Urizen. However, both didn't realize that they are father and son at the time. As time went on, V then reunited with Urizen, as Dante said, "He returned to himself". Nero after knowing that Vergil is his father



tried to stop his family from murdering each other. At the end of the game, Vergil gave Nero his collection book of poems, as shown in the image below:

Figure 4

Vergil Gives Nero His Poetry Book (Devil May Cry 5, 2019)



As shown above, Vergil said that he will return, and he won't lose to Nero the next time they fight again. The authors conclude that Vergil and Nero may bond as father and son through fighting, as it is the only way that they both know.

Structures of Nero's Personality

Nero's Impulsive Side

Plumptre (2021) stated that a short temper is an explosion of emotion with very little to no warning. This emotional burst sometimes can cause embarrassment for short-tempered people. In the Devil May Cry franchise, Nero is shown to have a short temper and is prone to be impulsive, as in the quotation below:

Figure 5

Nero About to Save Kyrie (Devil May Cry 4, 2008)



As quoted above, Nero is shown to be a choleric character whose emotions can get the better of him, especially when his loved ones are involved. Nero was willing to take lives if it was meant to save the people he cares about the most.



Nero's Rebellious Side

According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, Rebellious is resisting treatment or management. In other words, rebellion is the act that refusing to cooperate, or even fighting a system. In the Devil May Cry series, Nero is depicted as a rebellious character, much like Dante. Most notable evidence was Nero wields a handgun, a weapon that was restricted by the Order of the Sword. It is indicated in the following statements.

"...I was busy working on my gun - another reason why I didn't get along with the people in the Order." (Morihashi, Deadly Fortune 1, 2009, p. 23).

"As the name would suggest, the Order of the Sword has a bit of a thing for swords....Guns are seen as too modern, almost like cheating." (Morihashi, 2009, p. 24).

As indicated above, Nero was against the strict rule of the Order by wielding a handgun. Guns were perceived as a shortcut, and there was no honor in slaying demons with other weapons besides swords. Another statement by Nero shows his rebellious act.

"Honestly, I don't really get it. If you end up getting yourself killed by demons because of some weird handicap you put on yourself, won't it all be pointless in the end?" (Morihashi, Deadly Fortune 1, 2009, p. 24).

Nero believed that the strict rules of weaponry would only bring handicaps for the demon hunters, as such he made his own arsenals to better battle the demons and go beyond the limited versatility of swords.

Nero's Arrogance Side

Parvez (2020) states that one of the reasons behind arrogance is arrogance acts as a defense mechanism. She explained that people behave arrogantly to hide their insecurity, inferiority, and lack of confidence. The authors find Nero's arrogance was related to his sense of insecurity, as such Nero acted arrogantly to never be overwhelmed by his insecurity of self-worth. It is indicated by the image below.

Figure 6

Nero's Arrogance Angers Agnus (Devil May Cry 4, 2008)





As shown above, Agnus stated that Nero was rumored to be a fouled-mouthed person. Therefore, Nero proved to be true that he is arrogant when he called the containment room a *hellhole*.

Causes of Nero's insecurity

Bharatam (2017) mentions that insecurity can be caused by five instances, namely lack of self-confidence, lack of trust and faith, lack of the ability to accept, fear from past experiences, or the fear of failure. People with a lack of self-acceptance will create a sense of insecurity within themselves that makes them easy to fear even the slightest problems. This study has found three causes of insecurity suffered by Nero, there are:

The Abandonment from Biological Parents

Since birth, Nero had never met his biological parents. His father, Vergil, left his mother behind after investigating the island of Fortuna and its connected story to Sparda, as shown below. After the birth of Nero, his mother dropped him at the door of the orphanage. It is indicated in the statement below.

“...a man could've come by, gotten a woman pregnant without knowing about it, she couldn't take care of the baby of a foreigner, so she abandoned that child at the orphanage's doorstep...” (Morihashi, Deadly Fortune 2, 2009, p. 295).

As indicated above, Nero was left on the orphanage's doorstep because his father, a foreigner, left the woman who would later bore Nero. And because the woman feared being called a prostitute, left her child at the orphanage. This would create the first insecurity within Nero, as he believed that he was abandoned by his own parents, as stated below.

“When I was little, I couldn't accept having been orphaned - I spent all my time thinking about why I'd been abandoned...” (Morihashi, Deadly Fortune 2, 2009, p. 293).

As mentioned above, Nero could not accept the fact that he was left alone at the orphanage's doorstep. Nero has always wondered why has he been abandoned by his own parents. The abandonment lead him to be bullied by other kids in the orphanage, as stated below:

“When I was a kid and other children would tease me for my uncertain lineage, I'd get angry and fight back.” (Morihashi, Deadly Fortune 2, 2009, p. 295).

As stated above, Nero was always bullied by other kids. This would lead Nero to start fights. Since Nero was always being teased for his parents leaving him, he eventually began to doubt himself. This was a traumatic experience for Nero ever since. Childhood traumatic experiences can cause the victim to be extremely insecure. Thus, Nero doubted his own existence which made his own parents didn't want him.

The Death of Credo

Ever since the death of Credo, Nero was always contemplating his lack of power to save his adoptive brother. It can be seen from the following image.

Figure 7



Nero Regretting Credo's Death (Devil May Cry 5, 2019)



As mentioned above, Nero despised himself because he did not have the strength to save Credo. *Kaiser Permanente* (n.d.) stated that grief for major loss can cause insecurity. Credo, like Kyrie, was the only family that Nero have and seeing him died without doing anything made Nero doubted his own abilities. Thus, the authors concluded Nero has insecurity about his abilities, and he feared his failure to save other people.

Being Called "Deadweight" by Dante

Nero viewed Dante as his mentor ever since Devil May Cry 4. The two eventually respected each other, as Dante even acknowledged Nero as a seasoned demon hunter and gave him his own mobile demon-hunting business. However, when Dante called Nero "deadweight", the feeling of insecurity struck Nero back. *Champion Analysis* (2019) shows that the feeling of being inferior and powerless was devastating to Nero after hearing Dante call him deadweight. This would lead Nero to doubt his own power, as he was trying to fight Urizen together with Dante, but Dante told him to retreat. Nero believed because he was powerless, Dante did not acknowledge and validated his abilities.

How Nero Deals with His Insecurities

Maulidya (n.d.) states that one of the standards in dealing with problems is to seek many opportunities for the second option. She also said that the elements that influence people in overcoming problems are occurring emotions and incorrect moves. In the Devil May Cry series, Nero deals with his insecurities in two ways, the first is seeking more power, and the second is seeking validation from others.

Seeking More Power

Nero was similar to Vergil in his desire for power, as both father and son seek to eliminate their inferiority. However, Nero's desire for power was never meant to be the strongest of all, but to protect the people he loved. It is shown in the image below.

Figure 8

Nero Takes the Risk of Being Exiled to Protect Kyrie (Devil May Cry 4, 2008)



As shown above, Nero said that he would protect Kyrie even if he would be exiled. The Fortuna was very strict on slaying demons, and if they found out Nero has a power of a demon, then surely Nero would be exiled. Nero believed that power would ensure that he would never lose his loved ones since they were the family he ever has. Below is another example where Nero wanted power to protect Kyrie.

Figure 9

Nero Not Wanting to Return the Yamato to Dante as He Needs Its Power (Devil May Cry 4, 2008)



As shown above, Nero demanded that he wanted the Yamato save Kyrie. After being defeated by Dante, Nero was demanded to return the blade. However, Nero refused, as he wanted the power. Nero believed that without power, he could not save Kyrie, and the feeling of insecurity would come to him. Thus, each time Nero began to feel insecure in himself and would seek more power.

Seeking Validation from Others

In the entirety of Devil May Cry 5, Nero was shown to re-seek validation from the man who called him deadweight. Champion Analysis (2019) states that Nero's adventure throughout Devil May Cry 5 was to prove to Urizen, Dante, and himself that he is powerful. It is shown below.



Figure 10

Nero Trying to Convince Dante that He Also Can Fight Urizen (Devil May Cry 5, 2019)



It is shown above that Nero tried to convince Dante to follow along to battle Urizen in the underworld by saying he has all the power needed. By doing this, Nero unintentionally sought Dante's approval and validation that he is capable of fighting demons. Another instance where Nero sought validation was from his phone call with Kyrie, as mentioned below.

"You always know which path is right, and which is wrong. There's no need to doubt yourself." - Kyrie (Mission 20, Devil May Cry 5, 2019).

Figure 11

Kyrie Reassures Nero That There's No Need to Doubt Himself (Devil May Cry 5, 2019)



As mentioned above, Nero called Kyrie to ask what he should do after discovering his actual family. In the midst of Nero's insecurity, he sought validation from the people he loved.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis that has been discussed in the findings and discussion section, the authors could draw several conclusions. First, the character of Nero in the Devil May Cry franchise is described as the son of Vergil and the nephew of Dante. Nero was born and raised in an orphanage in Fortuna, an island ruled by



the demon-slaying religious devotees called the Order of the Sword. Pointed from his social relationship with people around him, Nero developed a kind of behavior that attach himself to the people closest to him. Nero viewed his adoptive siblings as the only family he ever had, and Dante as the man and mentor who he respected the most.

Second, Nero's choleric and bad attitudes are due to his feelings of inferiority and insecurity. These are what affect his bad social relations with his fellow knights of the Order. Nero's personality to cope with his insecurity is being impulsive, rebellious, and arrogant. What led Nero to develop his character was his insecurity, which is caused by the abandonment at the orphanage doorstep, the death of Credo, and being called a deadweight by Dante. These are related to Pahey's research, as experiencing many traumas would create a sense of insecurity within Nero. Third, while facing his feeling of insecurity, Nero has two ways to cope with his inferiority. Namely, seeking more power to save the people he loved, and to seek the validation he needed to prove that he was capable to be loved and being sure of his own existence.

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