

## Game as a Survival Strategy in *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins

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### Abstract

Suzanne Collins' novel, *The Hunger Games* portrays a dystopian society where the powerful maintain control through manipulation, spectacle, and punishment. The annual Hunger Games serve as a means to reinforce authority while forcing young tributes into a brutal survival game dictated by physical skill, deception, and strategic alliances. This paper analyzes the novel's themes of power, control, survival, and deception, exploring how the Capitol uses the Games to assert dominance. At the same time, the tributes navigate the competition as their only means of existence. A thematic analysis of the novel focuses on how the Games function as both entertainment and oppression, the role of manipulation in survival, and the broader implications of performance in a controlled society. The study examines key characters such as Katniss, Peeta, Rue, and the Careers to illustrate the complex interplay of trust, deceit, and strategy. The analysis reveals that the Games are about physical endurance, intelligence, political maneuvering, and social strategy. The Capitol erases individual identity and emotions, reinforcing control through spectacle. However, tributes like Katniss and Peeta subvert these dynamics by using performance and deception to challenge authority. The novel critiques a society where power is sustained through manipulation and perception. It demonstrates that survival extends beyond the arena, emphasizing the ethical and emotional costs of strategic performance in both dystopian and real-world settings.

**Keywords:** Deception, Dystopia, Manipulation, Power, Spectacle, Survival.

### Introduction

The novel, *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins is a dystopian fiction that entertains the society as interfere games which promote the teenage to fight each other until the winner is considered. This dehumanizing game portrays violence as contributing element of the Capitol and the challenges for survival of the tributes. Katniss Everdeen, the protagonist of the novel and the following tributes, is compelled to compete in a vicious televised event where they must battle to the death. In this context, the idea of the game emerges and becomes an essential survival tactic, not just for surviving physically but also for negotiating social and political dynamics. The main determination of the game is to show the power and discission making role of the Capitol. It is interesting to examine how the game protects each Panem people by incorporating survival strategy. The novel shows how relationships, deceit, and strategy influence the characters to compete in the

game and eventually decides their outcome. These activities motivate the players to use tactic for the game (1). The design and mechanics of the game examine how the tributes are manipulated and engaged them with strategies. The game promotes the tributes to form an alliance, which becomes a vital role for their survival. At the same time, engaging the audience with game promoting fireballs, mutts and other creators is a Capitol's spectacle of reminding the past rebellion.

The background of this study explores the characterization of the dystopian society which includes the themes of social discrimination maintained by political systems, inhibition of freedom that highlights the minacious life style of the people. The common elements like survival fitness, oppressive tactic and resisting are explored. Many research studies include authoritarianism, totalitarianism, socioeconomic inequality, character analysis, poverty, dystopian

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society, gender role studies as well as the spectacles of media, psychological effects of characters like Katniss are also discussed in previous study. The outcome of this study brings the game in a fascinating setting by examining various tactics which includes acquisition like foraging, hunting, scavenging, concealment, environmental adoption, alliance formation and the strategic use of violence and avoidance. This paper also emphasizes the role of ingenuity, adaptability and the importance of practical skills, knowledge of the real world, mental flexibility in adverse condition. Even though the fight is in physical well-being the symbolic act and narrative control is an effective means of igniting and influencing public opinion both within and outside the arena. The game is fictional and the arena is constructed by the game makers with artificial weather, terrain, and hazards. Thus, this study delves with psychological and emotional survival and fully focused with survival strategy.

The Capitol initiate the game to control the people through the violent game and forcing children to fight for entertainment as well as a punishment is a piteous situation. Using game as a tactic to kill children is such a hateful action. However, the previous analysis discussed about the totalitarian, political regime, power discourse, psychological analysis of character but, the techniques used by the players to survive and their performance, knowledge and skills are used to resist in the totalitarian political society is limited. The dominating rule and their way of controlling the people with rules and fantasy environment also has a variation. The objective of this study employs that the various survival strategies used by the tributes with physical, psychological and symbolic tactics. The specific rules, environment, manipulative intervention of Capitol as well as the tributes highlight how game develops arena as a place of survival where Katniss Everdeen turns her personal survival techniques into group resistance tactics against the Capitol. The ethical and psychological effect of using game as a survival tactic of the characters like Katniss, Peeta, Rue, Haymitch, Chinna are explored by their performance and skills. The motive of the game is not just an entertainment but also to control the people of Panem. The President Snow and the game maker's way of designing the game is to prevent dissent and secure their power and the

tributes using their tactics indirectly by performing that they are favour of the Capitol brings the novelty of this study. Thus, this article focuses on how this game act as survival tactics for the tributes and a controlling mechanism for the Capitol.

## Methodology

This study deals with descriptive and textual analysis method to examine the various tactics of the game. The main objective of this study is to demonstrate how the game can be used as a survival tactic and to exert influence over others. The key characters like Katniss, Peeta and Rue skills and performance is analyzed to bring out the physical endurance, intelligence, political maneuvering, and social strategy in the game. It also analyses the ethical and emotional strategies performed by the characters in a controlled environment. The study aims to investigate how the Capitol utilizes the games to exert power and control over the districts. This examines the various survival strategies utilized by the career tributes for their survival, which includes Skills, Deception, Performance, Perception and formation of alliance. This technique implies a critical study of how power is challenged and subverted through individual acts and strategic performances.

This study also examines the character's decision-making, thematic progression, and symbolic representations which highlight the complex nature of the game as a survival strategy and their sociopolitical consequences. Even though the game is fiction, it also incorporates conceptual ideas from the game studies like its strategies, principles, rules and mechanics used by the players. The game is played with clear rules, specific goal of survival, assigned participants as tributes, a regulated setting arena and the people of Panem and the Capitol as audience. The tribute's performance in the game is also tragic, strategic and emotional that manufactured a crucial component of their psychological and symbolic survival.

## Results and Discussion

### The Hunger Games as a Literal Game

The Hunger Games is primarily a literal game, but it is also well-known for its compelling dystopian plot and social satire. The Capital created the game as a killing combat to promote terror and keep the districts under control. Teens are compelled to

battle and cross physical limits in order to decide the winner in the society portrayed in the book. The novel's setting, rules, and strategies reflect the mechanics of a competitive game, making it an engaging and intense survival challenge for both the characters and the audience. Particularly, the president of the Capitol declares a violent game instead of war on the district and inaugurates the game every year. As the protagonist has so many family burdens conveying her inefficiency in game, but still challenged the power of the Capitol by volunteering for her sister is a kind of tactic. Exhibiting the ideology of the Capitol, the injustice as a divine justice and social control astonished the people, and later it explored in an obeying manner, even though their children's death was live telecasted (2). The president Snow has trust in violence which controls the people, who again could not think about rebellion. So that the reaping is organized as a reminder of rebellion (3). Tributes are not only expected to kill each other but also to perform for an audience. They can be watched by the audience, and few will be worried and few people enjoy the game for the thrill and excitement of who will be the next. The Capitol uses their own strategy and chooses new tributes and assigns them new tasks in the arena along with new procedures and regulations (4).

### **Game Structure and Rules**

A defining feature of any game is its structure, and The Games operates within a well-defined set of rules. The spectators will become weary of watching the game because it is played out year after year in the same manner and with the same tactics, but the structure of the arena where the public has been watching the game changes. As Katniss says, "I don't even know if there'll be wood, I say. Another year, they tossed everybody into a landscape of nothing but boulders and sand and scruffy bushes. I particularly hated that year. Many contestants were bitten by venomous snakes or went insane from thirst" (5). This shows that the structure of the game is unpredictable and the players are unfamiliar with the place.

As a punishment for past rebels each year, the Capitol selects 24 players, one male and one female from each of the 12 districts as a tribute, who are then placed into a vast arena where they must fight to the death until only one remains as the winner of the competition (6). As Katniss says "The rules of the games are simple. In punishment for the

uprising, each of the twelve districts must provide one girl and one boy, called tributes, to participate" (5). The primary goal of the game is to demonstrate the power strength and capacity, which it uses to quell revolt and amuse itself in the Capitol, as well as to assess the morality of people's worries about the game's risky mechanics and ideals. As Katniss says, "Whatever words they use, the real message is clear. Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there's nothing you can do" (5). Thus, the game's goal is survival, but its mechanics involve not just brute force but also intelligence, alliances, and adaptability.

Games always involve strategy, and has no exception. The pre training session for the tributes gives them advanced influence of mirroring about their competitors resource acquisition, skills. In that session, they utilize their different equipment and skills to showcase their ability as well as their district courage (7). The wealthier district tributes perform like an elite player with prior training and the other few tributes includes Rue, Peeta and Katniss who have less privileged districts but highlights the importance of adaptability and their strategic thinking. Rue used her talents of mimic as a strategy to survive. She also showed her boldness in the interview by saying, "I'm very hard to catch, she says in a tremulous voice. And if they can't catch me, they can't kill me. So don't count me out" (5). Thus, she shows her boldness as a strategy to get viewers and survive in the arena. Peeta is a male tribute from district twelve. His character is mentioned as a helping and kind hearted man (8). Katniss portrays "Peeta should have gone into his private session with the game maker and painted himself into a tree or a boulder" (5). Every tribute displays their fighting and survival tactics to wow the audience and game developers, and Peeta displays his artistic talents, which he employed as a survival tactic. Katniss exhibits her skill of archery to impress the game makers and said, "Without thinking, I pull an arrow from my quiver and send it straight at the Game maker's table" (5). Thus, the tributes utilize different techniques to impress the game makers and to survive in the arena.

### **The Game Makers: Designers and Arbitrators**

In any game, there are designers and referees who shape the experience. In the game, the Capitol's Game makers fill this role. They craft the arena,

introducing challenges and ensuring that the game remains engaging and dramatic for spectators. As a designer, they made a creative world for the players and kept the environment control much like a game master in tabletop or a developer with different levels like video games. In every session, they introduce new obstacles like fire, floods and genetically engineered creatures (9). The certain rules are followed by the game makers to make sure that the progress of the game continues as by their plan. These include designated boundaries that the tributes can't escape in between the game, provisions for weapons and supplies. The game makers encourage conflict amongst the participants by employing this tactic. To heighten the challenge, the Game Makers manipulate the arena, providing necessary supplies and weapons while also introducing environmental dangers and mutated creatures. This orchestrated chaos is similar to a video game or sport, forces the tributes to strategize and adapt to unpredictable conditions within strict rules to survive (10). Their role as an arbitrator highlights the element of control they have as a game designers exert over player experiences. Even though they won't participate directly in the game, they are the reason for the changes happening in the game. They manipulate the environment in favor of the audience entertainment like environmental hazards. They also effectively play the role of judge and jury of the game. Their decision as a game maker will be mostly favor for the audience and the Capitol (11). The Game Makers create a horrifying arena into a death world, where fear and death are intertwined with a false promise of freedom. Tributes are forced to participate in the game and face certain peril after sacrificing themselves. The arena is designed like reminiscent of squalid prison and refugee camps that serves as both a source of entertainment for the Capitol and a control for people. This system breeds a deep yearning for liberation from poverty and a life of peace (12). The tributes had to struggle and fight for their lives, even for food, shelter, and weapons, thus, they had no idea if they would survive or not. They should commit murder or serve as a scapegoat if they wish to live (13). Thus, in order to force tributes to adapt, the Game-makers alter the environment by adding fireballs, mutations, and rule modifications. The violence of the Games

swiftly overwhelms those who do not perceive it as a strategic competition.

Like a real-life competitive event, reality program, sports competition, the Hunger Games serve as entertainment for the Capitol. By gambling supporting tributes, and following their development, the audience adds a participatory element to the game. This is similar to contemporary competitive games where fans may affect results by voting, sponsoring, or making money online. "If no one sponsors me, my odds of staying alive decrease to almost zero" (5). The importance of audience engagement is highlighted by its direct link to sponsorships. In this competitive environment, Katniss and Peeta cultivate a compelling narrative to attract and maintain audience attention. They narrated a story of love in order to get favor and support. Katniss's performance of caring and emotions is a calculated strategy to generate empathy and secure necessary resources (14).

### **Strategy and Resourcefulness as Key to Survival**

Katniss's survival in the Games is largely due to her ability to strategize. She is skilled in hunting, archery, and foraging the skills that help her find food and defend herself. Her father taught her hunting to feed the family and she used the skill to hunt animals and feed the family. But after the reaping period the skill she used to hunt the animal and to feed the family is now used as a strategy to kill her opponent and for her survival (15). Unlike many other tributes who rely on brute strength, Katniss uses intelligence and patience to outlast others. Her ability to stay hidden, use traps, and understand the arena's resources proves essential. For instance, she drops a tracker jacker nest on her enemies, taking advantage of the environment rather than engaging in direct combat. Rue, a small girl from district eight, mock like a bird to escape from the career tributes. Rue says, "Oh, yes. I have a few that are my special friends. We can sing back and forth for hours. They carry message for me" (5). Her talent of singing like a mocking jay characterizes her love toward the bird, and she used her talent as a strategy for the survival (16). From the moment Katniss enters The Hunger Games, her strategic planning becomes the most valuable asset. Unlike other tributes who sheer

aggression, she carefully assesses her surroundings, forms alliances, and uses deception to outsmart stronger opponents. Her initial decision to avoid the bloodbath at the Cornucopia, where many tributes fight over supplies, showcases her ability to prioritize long-term survival over immediate gain (17). This also states that she obtains his mentor's suggestion "Just clear out, put as much distance as you can between yourselves and the others, and find a source of water" (5). Avoiding the tributes without engaging in combat with them in order to get the weapon is also a survival strategy. She retreated to a place where no one could see her and employed her survival abilities to avoid conflict there. By choosing to remain concealed from other tributes, they strengthen their chances of surviving. By examining all of her hardships, she dealt with every circumstance as a wilderness girl (17).

The male tribute Peeta used his painting technique as a coping mechanism when he was having trouble surviving in front of other tributes. He covered himself in green leaves and muck, making himself inconspicuous in places where it is hard for others to discover as portrayed "His face and arms are so artfully disguised as to be invisible. I kneel beside him" (5). In the arena, Peeta used his talent of painting to escape from other tributes. "The mud and plants seem to have imprisoned him and I finally have to give a gigantic tug to break him from their clutches" (5). He becomes invisible thanks to his art, and he uses this tactic to survive after Cato injures him. So, this is also a kind of strategy to impress the audience where the sponsors have influence on the game and send gifts, medicine, food and other edible needs for their favorite players.

### **Resourcefulness in a Hostile Environment**

The novel also demonstrates resourcefulness through improvisation. When Peeta is injured, Katniss uses knowledge gained from Rue and her mother's healing expertise to treat his wounds. She always considers her next move. So that she cleverly manipulates the audience's perception by playing up her relationship with Peeta to securing vital sponsorships that provide necessary supplies. She makes the audience trust and makes them feel pity for them to get their supplies. This highlights that the most crucial ability to go on to the next level is another aspect of resourcefulness (17). She

learned hunting, tracking skills from her father and about herbs and edible plants from her mother. Her ability to set traps illustrates how self-sufficiency can make the difference between life and death. As Katniss has the experience with wood and hunting before entering the game, and her presence of mind make her easily manages with the environment (18).

### **Intelligence over Physical Strength**

According to the game in the novel, more than physical strength, knowledge is important. While few tribute showcases their physical strength, which they used to kill their opponent but there are characters like Katniss, Rue and Peeta used their intelligence to escape from the fight. The game brings the superiority of knowledge and adaptability. The strategic decision Katniss makes is allying with Rue, the youngest tribute from district eight. Their partnership provides mutual protection and allows them to combine their skills and helps them to survive together. Rue's knowledge of climbing trees, plants and signals complements as well as Katniss's hunting abilities are the skills used by them to survive. She understands teamwork is a survival strategy when Rue rescued her when she was in trouble. Katniss says that "How comforting the presence of another human being can be" (5). So, this bonding reflects the importance of emotional intelligence. This discussion emphasizes that strength alone is not sufficient; rather than survival hinges on strategic thinking, resource management, and quick decision-making which enables them to survive (16). Katniss, with her knowledge helped Peeta when he is wounded and pretend romantically and received medicine and supplies from sponsors. Thus, pretending like star crossed lover gives them credits from the audience and proves that Knowledge is more important than physical strength (19).

### **The Role of Deception and Performance**

In The Hunger Games, survival is not just about physical strength, but it also requires psychological manipulation. The players should have stability to survive mentally and emotionally through trauma, manipulation and desire. The Characters, Katniss and Peeta's staged romance is a key example of how performance becomes a survival tool. When Peeta introduced the love strategy, Katniss got angry but their mentor

Haymitch supported him and said, "He made you look desirable! And let's face it, you can use all the help you can get in the department. You were about as romantic as dirt until he said he wanted you. Now they all do. You're all they're talking about. The star-crossed lovers from District Twelve!" (5). This shows the importance of performance; the viewers will feel sympathy towards their love and support them for their survival (20). The Capitol focused only on their happiness. They only needed entertainment since they were all misbehaving toward humans, and they utilized games to subjugate people and physically breach boundaries. The voice of Claudius Templesmith announces, "The earlier revision has been revoked, closer examination of the rule book has disclosed that only one winner may be allowed" (5). The declaration that only one winner would be permitted demonstrates the Capitol's deception authority to alter the rules with its standards for the nation to be ruled by the powers. It also displays the Capitol's fox-faced mind (21). As Sensing that Capitol would lose if they didn't have at least one winner, Katniss performed her strategy and threatened the Capitol by holding black berries in their hand. Peeta and Katniss pretend that consuming the black berries will kill them both. More than a survival tactic it turns into a rebellion against the Capitol (22). They learned the audience's mind and used the imaginary love-tale as a strategy to win the game. Her attitude makes the Capitol anxious, and they once more declare that two persons will triumph. Thus, everything becomes their strategy to survive. The ability to manipulate the audience determines who survives and who perishes (23).

### **Deception as a Survival Strategy**

In *The Hunger Games*, deception is often the key to staying alive. The tributes are forced to hide their weaknesses and project strength, knowing that any sign of vulnerability can be exploited. Every tribute has a different survival plan since not everyone will display their bravery and destroy others, while some people will display their innocence to win others over. Peeta breaks down in front of the cameras during the reaping time when the tributes are chosen, showing emotion on his face. As Katniss says, "Peeta Mellark, on the other hand, has been crying and interestingly enough does not seem to be trying to cover it up" (5). His terrified expression indicates that he will

not engage in combat; instead, he adopts Johanna Mason's approach of portraying her naive face and killing the opposition in order to prevail. Here, Peeta shows weakness as a survival strategy to escape from fighting with other tributes. Katniss claims that because she is anxious about the game, she puts on a facemask in front of the media and declares, "I've been right to cry. The station is swarming with reporters with their insect-like cameras trained directly on my face. But I've had a lot of practice at wiping my face clean of emotions and I do this now" (5). It explains that Katniss is emotional and still she shows her brave face, conveying that she is ready to fight. This demonstrates how the two characters employed distinct strategies by exposing their advantages and disadvantages to the viewer.

One of the most significant moments of deception occurs when Katniss concerns her feelings for Peeta Mellark. Their relationship is initiated to win audience favor and it becomes a powerful survival tool. By convincing the audience and the Game makers that they are deeply in love, Katniss and Peeta receive sponsorships that provide supplies, such as medicine and food. This act of deception is a direct response to *The Hunger Games'* nature as a televised spectacle, where tributes are not just fighters but also performers playing for an audience (14). Peeta also employs deception during their interviews. Peeta shows his care for Katniss and pretends the audience believes that he will protect her. This strategy helps him to gain more support from the audience and avoids immediate elimination. Thus, through his manipulation strategy, he exemplifies how deception can serve as a tool and shield. The novel highlights how characters must manipulate appearances, conceal true intentions, and perform for both the Capitol and their fellow tributes to gain advantages (24). The conceptual framework of game includes the power, resistance, inequality, sacrifice and tactics which are intertwined. Thus, while analysing the strategy, resourcefulness, intelligence, deception and performance of the players, deliberated that the elements like symbolic resistance, psychological fortitude and physical survival becomes a necessary skill for every tribute to perform feigning emotions, displaying weakness and strength to survive. Here, psychological fortitude is employed to manipulate audience and game makers in order to ensure the

players' survival. Katniss's mocking jay clothing and eating deadly berries are examples of symbolic resistance. Archery, tree climbing, painting, and finding food and water are examples of physical survival skills that are also employed as survival strategies.

### **Performance and Public Perception**

Performance is equally crucial in *The Hunger Games*, as tributes must captivate the audience to secure sponsors and support. In the arena, the combatants themselves demand to die. Katniss wonders how she will survive in the game creator arena and is certain that she must battle other players to survive. She is not an emotional girl and knows it won't work, so this makes her want to compete even more she says, "I cannot afford to get upset, to leave this room with puffy eyes and a red nose. Crying is not an option. There will be more cameras at the train station" (5). To win the game, she employs the tactic of displaying her bravery rather than her frailty. She downplays her emotions, hides her fear, and only reveals information strategically. The Games are not just a brutal fight to the death, but also a reality television event designed for entertainment. Contestants are expected to present themselves in a way that appeals to viewers, whether by appearing strong, charming, or tragic (23). Therefore, the media is terrible for people not only in the dystopian society but also in the real world, where discrimination against men and women, the wealthy and the poor, power and common people, and so on (25). It is explored that media is also a tactic that handled by the power regimes that control the masses, media that keeps the viewers and audience engaged by entertaining them with the suspense (26).

When they had no plan how to handle the interview, Haymitch suggested to behave in an average manner saying, "Trying to appear mediocre in front of other tributes is the last bit of strategy I remember" (5). Here, her hiding skill also becomes a strategy. When Katniss worried about getting low scores during the training, Portia said, "Scores only matter if they're very good; no one pays much attention to the bad or mediocre ones. For all they know, you could be hiding your talents to get a low score on purpose. People use that strategy" (5). This shows that getting a bad score is not a matter and getting audience attention is important. Knowingly or unknowingly,

Katniss gets the audience's attention through her volunteer instead of her sister. Katniss's transformation into the "Girl on Fire" is one of the most striking examples of performance. Under the guidance of her stylist, Cinna, she adopts a persona that is both captivating and defiant. Despite being a girl and having greater familial responsibilities, Katniss wears a face mask in public. Dreamily, Cinna continues, "I want the audience to recognize you when you're in the arena," says Cinna dreamily. 'Katniss, the girl who was on fire' (5). Because she volunteered and became well-known in the district. It demonstrates the gender politics that female tributes volunteering has received more attention than male tributes (27).

Her fiery outfits and confident demeanor help her to stand out among the tributes, increasing her chances of survival before the Games even begin. Haymitch says, "Now I can say you're a heart breaker. Oh, oh, oh, how the boys back home fall longingly at your feet. which do you think will get you more sponsors?" (5). So, her clothing is also a commercial discourse strategy which leads the audience to think of her as a branded (28). Getting ready and wearing a gown and high-heeled shoes, and also the walking style, eye contact, gestures, smiling, everything is noticed by the audience and that should attract them, as Effie says, "Just remember, Katniss, you want the audience to like you" (5). Here, they mold the strategy utilizing gender stereotyping to provoke the audience. This performance continues throughout the Games, as she carefully balances her public image, understanding that the way she is perceived can determine the level of support she receives (29).

Similarly, Peeta's confession of love for Katniss during the pre-Games interviews is a masterstroke of performance. His declaration captures the audience's attention and forces Katniss into a romantic narrative that benefits them both. He employed his star-crossed love for Katniss as a tactic to draw in viewers. He also flaunts that he cares for Katniss. When Katniss refuse to accept the star-crossed love strategy Haymitch says, "Who cares? It's all a big show. It's all how you're perceived. The most I could say about you after your interview was that you were nice enough, although that in itself was a small miracle" (5). Katniss maintained her composure despite being taken aback by Peeta's revelation of his love plan by keeping her startled look hidden from the

public because the cameras were trained on the two of them. She says, "I allow my eyes to flicker up to the screen long enough to see that the blush on my cheeks is unmistakable" (5). By playing into the trope of star-crossed lovers, they manipulate the Game makers and gain sympathy from viewers, ultimately leading to the rule change that allows two victors from the same district. This analysis shows the purpose of performance of tributes in the game particularly the characters like Katniss, Peeta and Rue's performance is discussed. The manipulation they made for their survival highlight the various non-combative strategies. This examines their performance for survival is unique that they used for dealing with the social dynamics and psychological stresses of the arena.

### **The Capitol's Use of Deception and Performance**

Deception and performance are not only tools for the tributes but also for the Capitol itself. The Hunger Games are presented as a fair and honorable competition, but in reality, they are a means of oppression. The everyday violence in the game is televised, which leads people to regret. The players exposed a variety of tactics through the contemporary form of physical violence that enables them to play the game forcefully. The political rules run by the Capitol also terrible that repress the people for put down the rebellion thought (30). The Capitol deceives the districts into believing that the Games are a form of justice, when in fact, they serve to reinforce the government's power and control.

The few elements like power, privilege and identity were given as a first preference that indicate the power of the Capitol. The rebellion, discipline and survival are the tools that are relevant to the character in the novel (24). To live, the citizens of Panem ought to adopt the Capitol's plan of action. The Gamemaker manipulate events in the arena to ensure maximum entertainment, altering rules and introducing obstacles to shape the narrative. This highlights the illusion of fairness in the Games, showing that even, the structure of the competition is built on deception. By crafting compelling storylines, the Capitol ensures that the Games remain a spectacle, distracting the populace from the true nature of their subjugation (31).

### **Alliances and Social Strategy**

Creating a relationship with other tributes is also another survival tactic. Katniss find out the alliance out of necessity and trust. Through this, she can obtain knowledge and emotional support. So, her alliance with Rue and Peeta helps her to survive. The Hunger Games is not only a battle for survival but also a complex social game where alliances and strategic relationships play a crucial role. Even though two tributes from the same district were chosen for the match, they were unable to trust and support one another within the arena. Katniss said, "A warning bell goes off in my head. Don't be so stupid. Peeta is planning how to kill you, I remind myself. He is luring you into make you easy prey" (5). The Capitol instilled in the populace the belief that everyone is their enemy. As a result, the People battle over their district tributes. This demonstrates how the Capitol sets up the conditions for the tributes to engage in conflict with one another and its tactic of encouraging conflict between the tributes by preventing their union. It's unfair to portray and bringing up the scenario of the tributes, who were all united during their training session and then engaged in combat with each other once they entered the arena. As Katniss declares, "It's not fair to present us as a team and lock us into the arena to kill each other" (5). The ridiculous predicament facing the tributes is that, despite their need for a companion in the arena, they are unable to trust anyone, as everyone is wearing a face mask in order to survive and attacks can occur at any time. This reveals the strategy of the Capitol that keeps the tributes at distance to not to stand against the Capitol. Sometimes, the ability to build relationships, manage social dynamics, and capitalize on connections is just as important for survival as using force and combat techniques. This analysis explores the significance of alliances and social strategy in The Hunger Games, how they impact the characters' outcomes, and how they relate to more general concerns of trust, deception, and human connection.

### **The Career Tributes: Alliances as a Power Strategy**

The temporary alliance among the Careers tributes highlights the nature of the Games. While their trust is missed and alliance grants them early



control over resources and allows them to hunt other tributes efficiently, it ultimately fails because it is based on convenience rather than loyalty. Once the number of tributes dwindles, former allies quickly turn against each other, revealing the instability of alliances built purely on power (26). In contrast to the temporary alliances formed by weaker tributes, the Career tributes from wealthier districts who trained for the Games and formed a team, worked as a team and support their team alliances. Katniss is an introvert girl who wishes to stay alone and think about her family. Katniss prioritizes her family's safety above everything else, especially that of her beloved sister. She uses a survival strategy to ensure her family's survival as well as her own, ignoring other aspects of her life in the process. Later she recognizes that keeping in touch with people will help her in needful (29). Katniss Everdeen's alliance with Rue is one of the most significant in the novel. Unlike the temporary and often self-serving alliances formed by the Career tributes, Katniss and Rue's partnership is built on mutual trust and compassion. Rue's agility and knowledge of plants complement Katniss's hunting skills, making them an effective team (29).

### **Social Strategy and Audience Manipulation**

The Hunger Games highlights the value of social strategy in gaining the audience's and sponsors' favor in addition to alliances within the arena. Beyond alliances within the arena, The Hunger Games also emphasizes the importance of social strategy in winning the favor of the audience and sponsors. Since the Games are not just a fight for survival but also a televised spectacle, tributes must carefully manage their public image. They manipulate the audience by showing them what they want to see. They could act kindly, showing fear, or even pretending to fall in love. By doing this, they get the audience's attention to feel sorry for them or root for them. If the audience is fond of a tribute, they might send them helpful things like food or medicine (10).

Katniss and Peeta's romance is an example of using social strategy to survive. They played their star-crossed lover's role before entering the arena by manipulating public sentiment, securing life-saving sponsorships. As they are aware of surveillance and they are watched by the audience, they play the role carefully. Peeta's initial declaration of love

during the pre-Games interview sets this strategy in motion, and Katniss's ability to adapt to this role strengthens their appeal. This analysis shows that surviving requires physical skill, but it also requires knowledge of human psychology and the ability to influence the opinions of people in positions of authority (32).

Each tribute stays unique in their strategies. Katniss, Peeta, Rue, Haymitch and Cinna are among the characters whose survival tactics are discussed. The talents Katniss acquired in the impoverished District 12—such as archery, hunting, trapping, tracking, tree climbing, and collecting food are her primary means of survival. Peeta is a charming and smart manipulator who uses star-crossed love for manipulating the Capitol and the audience. In addition to having a deep understanding of the psychology of the Capitol and the game mechanics, Haymitch, The Hunger Games victor, is trained to convince sponsors and audience. He also supports Katniss and Peeta's survival strategies by providing them gifts in the arena. Rue is an intelligent and brave girl who diverts the people by mocking like a bird. Her ability to survive under challenging circumstances is demonstrated by her use of birds as a mediator. As a stylist, Cinna turns Katniss into a Mockingjay by designing her dress, which draws attention from the crowd, particularly young people. Therefore, this study looks at how characters like Katniss, Peeta, Rue, Haymitch, and Cinna used their unique techniques in the game to survive.

### **The Hunger Games as a Political Game**

According to the game in the novel, several teenage children were ruined in the name of the game. In this stage of unfair situation, the protagonist said that "Taking the kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch this is the Capitol's way of reminding us how we are at their mercy. How little chance we would stand of surviving another rebellion" (5). Although this cause is a past harm but it still exists, leads the players to utilize the strategies in their turn of gaming. This tactic serves as a survival tool for understanding the manipulative thought of the Capitol that they used for war. This game reminds the Capitol's power and oppression and their mercy for the people. A political analysis of The Hunger Games reveals how the book examines the manipulation of public opinion, criticizes authoritarian governance, and emphasizes the

importance of rebellion in opposing repressive structures (6). The novel is deeply rooted in the themes of survival, power, and manipulation. Among the many strategies employed by the tributes, deception and performance play crucial roles in determining who lives and who dies. Every individual's desire to survive is accompanied by fear during the reaping season. The Capitol is the district's decision-making body, and they will choose whether a person should live or die (12). Misery, war, and oppression are all examples of how the Capitol is unequal and impacts every member of society. People remind the costs of war through The Hunger Games, which have an impact on daily life and cause anxiety and hunger for necessities like food, peace, and a society free from violence (33). By analyzing the role of deception and performance in The Hunger Games, we can understand how these elements are essential not only for survival in the arena but also for navigating the oppressive society of Panem.

### **The Hunger Games as a Tool of Political Control**

At its core, The Hunger Games are a mechanism of oppression. The reaping event is designed to remind the districts of their mistake, reinforcing the Capitol's authority through fear and spectacle. By forcing children to fight to the death while broadcasting it as entertainment, the Capitol turns the Games into both a punishment for past rebellion and a deterrent against future uprisings and threatens to punish the entire district if anyone raises their hands in opposition to it using this game tactic. The Capitol declares, "If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you" (5). This killing strategy of the Capitol forces the people to maintain composure. The most upsetting thing is that everyone, including the tribute's families in each area, witnesses the tributes death live on television. Seeing their children murder others or be murdered by other tributes who acknowledge that they have not rebelled against the Capitol is an agonizing punishment. And this is the Capitol's strategy to warn and remind people about the districts impending rebellion against the Capitol. This reflects real-world political systems where the economically disadvantaged often suffer the most under oppressive regimes (34). Thus, the Capitol utilizes The Hunger games to make people under their control.

### **Manipulation of Public Perception**

The Hunger Games as a political game is the manipulation of public perception. The Capitol controls the Games' narrative, deciding how events are portrayed to the audience. Tributes are not just participants in a battle for survival; they are characters in a carefully curated spectacle designed to entertain and pacify the populace. So, to get the sympathy of the audience, the tributes play a manipulation role. One of the main participants in this political manipulation is Katniss Everdeen. She must first perform for the audience, forming her public persona in order to get sponsors. "The roar of the crowd is deafening. Peeta has absolutely wiped the rest of us off the map with his declaration of love for me" (5). Peeta's declaration of love for Katniss surprised her and it exemplifies how their fabricated relationship was used to manipulate public opinion. But as the Games go on, Katniss starts to realize how powerful perception is. She becomes a symbol of rebellion when she defies the Capitol's authority by threatening to eat deadly berries with Peeta. This manipulation of star-crossed love role helps them to survive in the Hunger Games. Here, the game function as a metaphor of survival. The most common metaphor used in the novel is the contrast between the wealthy Capitol and the poor district. The game is initiated with the purpose of punishing the people but later this purpose leads to entertainment for the wealthy people. Thus, it is analysed that the game function as a metaphor of socio-political dynamics through the analysis of power, political control, inequality, oppression, rebellion etc.

### **Rebellion and Political Resistance**

The Capitol created The Hunger Games to punish the districts for a past rebellion and to keep them afraid. Though the people hate the Games, they're forced to participate. Katniss's actions become acts of rebellion against the Capitol. First, she shows defiance by honoring Rue's death in a way that challenges the Capitol's control. Then, she realizes how the Capitol constantly changes the rules to suit their own needs. This leads her to another act of rebellion: threatening suicide with poisonous berries. Even though Katniss doesn't intentionally seek to be a rebel, the Capitol's manipulative behavior pushes her into resistance (15).

The Hunger Games series depicts a struggle for

power where both the Capitol and the rebellious districts employ political strategies. Notably, Katniss inadvertently becomes a symbol of rebellion. Her initial act of volunteering as tribute, coupled with her symbolic costume and the Mockingjay pin, captured public attention. This demonstrates how public perception and symbolic actions can be powerful tools in resistance against oppressive regimes (35). Thus, the novel deals with dystopian society but also deeply explore the survival strategies that determine life or death. The career tributes exemplify these qualities and navigate the brutal arena by demonstrating intelligence, adaptability, and resilience (36). Beyond the rebellion, the game functions as a multi-layered survival strategy enclosing physical, psychological acts against oppressive regime. Through an examination of survival strategy, the game provides a sophisticated perspective for understanding a dystopian society. It goes beyond the easy contrast of obedience and flagrant disobedience and shows how tributes frequently work around and take advantage of the structures put in place to keep them under control. This viewpoint challenges readers to recognize not only overt actions of rebellion but also the more covert, frequently performative strategies of survival. It emphasizes that dystopian games are emergent environments where people who comprehend their rules can disrupt power dynamics rather than just being displays of control. As, a result of being forced players, losing their family and their survival mechanism transform the game as a survival strategy.

## Conclusion

The helplessness of those in positions of authority is exposed in this novel. The young players are trapped in a vicious cycle that the powerful have created, and the game is their last chance of survival it is a kind of do-or-die scenario. The game turns into the tributes sole chance of surviving through physical skills, deception, alliances or political manipulation. Thus, existence itself is the game, not a choice. In addition, the presidents use this game as a kind of punishment and a reminder to obey in order to maintain their sovereign right to determine who lives and who dies. Additionally, this turns into a form of entertainment for the social elite who control the majority of the economy. The Capitol conceals the people's identities, voices, and feelings. The people use face

masks as another tactic to rein in their emotional outbursts. More than physical strength, intelligence is used for a victor. Generational control is made possible by the word Tribute, which instills the survival mentality in the children. The chosen Tributes must follow the guidelines and agree to participate; the Capitol taught them to fight as well. The game gets more intense because both individual survival and the district's survival depend on the Tributes. Survival is based on performance because they will have sponsors who will supply food, water, and medication based on their output. They must therefore organize their survival techniques, such as painting, archery, tree-climbing and mocking like a lover.

Playing the death game ends up being the only way for the people under the control of a strong sovereign to satisfy their appetite for life, is depicted in *The Hunger Games*. The performance and deceit are crucial since they affect not just the tributes' ability to survive but also the greater power dynamics at work. While the Capitol uses spectacle to keep the districts under control, Katniss and Peeta avoid the perils of the arena by manipulating appearances. By these themes, Collins highlights the perils of living in a society where authority is upheld by performance and manipulation and criticizes a culture where perception frequently takes precedence over fact. Thus, the novel demonstrates the difficulties of trust, deceit, and survival through Katniss, Rue, Peeta, and the Careers. In the end, the book emphasizes that social strategy may be a potent instrument in both the arena and the real world, but it also has moral and emotional repercussions.

## Abbreviation

None.

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Abisha AP: Conceived the idea, analyzed the material, prepared the original draft, Arnest Kharmawlong: Conceived the idea, analyzed the material, prepared the original draft, Shiny Karunya T: Conceived the idea, analyzed the material, prepared the original draft, Preha C: Conceived the idea, analyzed the material, prepared the original draft, VM Berlin Grace:

Structured the manuscript, D David Wilson: Edited the manuscript and supervised the study.

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