

BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

AND ALCOHOL USE DISORDER

IN *DAHMER-MONSTER: THE JEFFREY DAHMER STORY* SERIES

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ABSTRACT

The study examines Dahmer's borderline personality disorder, alcohol use disorder, and the causes as they are portrayed in *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* series. The study uses a theory from The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR). In analyzing the data, the writer used qualitative descriptive methods. The writer found there are 6 BPD and 6 AUD symptoms. For the causes, Dahmer's BPD and AUD are affected by his environment. In the comorbidity of BPD and AUD, Dahmer's emotional instability caused him to have impulsivity which was a predictor of AUD in his BPD. From this, it can be concluded that Dahmer suffered from BPD and AUD because of his parents' neglectful behavior and treatment of him from when he was a child until he was grown up. This emotional neglect given by his parents then led him to commit crimes by killing people as a result.

Keywords: *Dahmer, Borderline Personality Disorder, Alcohol Use Disorder and Comorbidity*

INTRODUCTION

Life's numerous events stimulate curiosity in humans, which can be analyzed using psychology to understand the reasons behind their happening. Psychology is defined broadly as the science of behavior and mental processes [1]. Psychology is the study of conscious and unconscious phenomena such as emotions, thoughts, and motivations [2]. In psychology, there is a term called Literary Psychology. Ayesha defines literary psychology as an interdisciplinary field that combines the study of literature and psychology [3]. Psychological content can be found in various genres, including poetry, short stories, novels, and dramas [4]. Film can be considered literature that employs visual media. This happens because film can convey narratives, explore themes, and elicit emotions. A film can be considered a form of literature [5]. In discussing the film, the writer analyzes the television series *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, focusing on Dahmer's mental health issues, including borderline personality disorder and alcohol use disorder, borderline personality disorder (BPD) is a medical problem

where an individual has a very difficult time controlling their relationships and emotions [6]. Alcohol use disorder (AUD) is a medical problem marked by a failure to manage and quit drinking even though it has negative consequences for one's health, work, and well-being. Alcohol abuse, alcohol dependence, addiction, and alcoholism are all phrases adopted to refer to situations that are categorized into the classification of alcohol use disorder [7]. Comorbidity between BPD and AUD can occur due to emotion dysregulation leading to impulsivity which can be an indicator of AUD in an individual suffering from BPD [8]. This study analyzes six episodes of the DM: TJDS series, focusing on borderline personality disorder and alcohol use disorder, as they are only featured in episodes one through six of the first season.

METHOD

The study employs the descriptive qualitative method, analyzing natural events and phenomena to understand their meanings and significance to individuals [9]. This study analyzes the mental illnesses (BPD and AUD) of the main character in the

Netflix series *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* (DM: TJDS). Primary data includes six episodes and dialogue scripts. Content analysis is used to improve data objectivity and identify coherence between the data and the theory, using Jeffrey Dahmer's character as a human instrument.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents an analysis based on research questions, focusing on two Dahmer parts: Dahmer's BPD and AUD. In this executive summary, the writer only displays some of the finding data.

SYMPTOMS OF BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

In the series, the writer found six symptoms of BPD in DM: TJDS. They are frantic efforts, unstable relationships, identity disturbance, impulsivity, chronic emptiness, and intense anger.

Frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment

The data describes Dahmer meeting a hitchhiker named Steven and offers to drop him off at a Pegasus concert. They work out, smoke, and drink beer while they are at Dahmer's place. When Steven wants to go, Dahmer makes a frantic effort to prevent being abandoned which can be seen in Figure 1.



Fig. 1. Dahmer kisses Steven/hitchhiker
(*"Doin' A Dahmer"* 00:37:13)

Figure 1 shows Steven at Dahmer's home, lifting weights without clothes. Dahmer is afraid Steven will leave him, causing him to alter his behavior. He initially welcomes Steven with a beer but becomes clingy when Steven wants to leave. Dahmer commits violent crimes, including inappropriate sexual behavior to get Steven's attention. His unexpected kiss to Steven, which is considered sexual harassment, demonstrates his fear and anxiety.

Identity disturbance: markedly and persistently unstable self-image or sense of self

The situation shows Dahmer, in a conversation with his stepmother Shari and father Lionel, admits to not wanting to attend college due to poor academic performance. Shari suggests enrolling in a community

college, which Dahmer initially rejects, leading to a negative self-perception.

DAHMER. I don't, I don't know. I know most of the guys who are going to college for science, and they get they get good grades and stuff. My grades are shit.

SHARI. Well, what about community college?

DAHMER. Community college, that's, like, for failures. Well, I mean, that might be where we're at. Yeah. But, like, uh That's what I am. Why am I trying to pretend to be something I'm not? You know? I'm not a good kid. Dad, I'm not a normal guy. I don't fit in. I'm weird. I don't I'm different from everybody else. There's something wrong with me, I think. [10]

This data shows Dahmer's life is described in a restaurant conversation, revealing his identity disturbance due to an unstable self-image. He describes himself as a failure due to poor grades and unable to attend a state university. Feeling ashamed of oneself leads to a negative self-concept, making it difficult to understand thoughts, feelings, and behavior. After graduating high school with poor grades, Dahmer's behavior, thoughts, and emotions changed, indicating an identity disturbance.

CAUSES OF BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

The study identifies environmental factors as the cause of borderline personality disorder in Dahmer, highlighting the emotional neglect caused by a demanding family environment.

The data describes Dahmer's formative years, including his family, environment, and background. His parents' constant fights and arguments exhibited emotional neglect towards him. It can be seen in Figures 2 and 3.



Fig. 2. Little Dahmer saw his parents argue
(*"Please Don't Go"* 00:05:37)

Figure 2 shows Dahmer's childhood emotional neglect, resulting from constant parental arguments, led to a lack of emotional support and care, affecting his closeness and emotional development until his teenage years. It can be seen in the figure 3.



Fig. 3. Teenager Dahmer saw his parents argue.
 (“Doin’ A Dahmer” 00:08:43)

Figure 3 shows Dahmer's emotional neglect, resulting from arguments between Joyce and Lionel since he was a kid led to him having aggressive behavior, low academic performance, substance abuse, and dangerous sexual behavior. This neglect resulted in low self-esteem, difficulty regulating emotions, emotional reactivity, and difficulty speaking up for oneself to Dahmer.

SYMPTOMS OF ALCOHOL USE DISORDER

The writer found six symptoms of AUD namely the writer found there are 6 symptoms of AUD Dahmer experienced such as alcohol often taken in larger amounts or over a longer period, unsuccessful effort to cut down or control alcohol use, great time spent in activities relating to alcohol, recurrent alcohol use failure to fulfill major role obligations, continued alcohol use, and tolerance increased amounts of alcohol

Alcohol is often taken in larger amounts or over a longer period than was intended.

The situation depicts Dahmer who left alone in his house by his parents in senior high school, begins excessive drinking due to the lack of social interaction. This can be seen in Figure 4.



Fig. 4. Teenager Dahmer goes to the liquor market
 (“Doin’ A Dahmer” 00:21:06-59)

Figure 4 shows Dahmer, who was left alone after his parents left, consumed more alcohol to cope with loneliness. His frequent visits to liquor stores and hallucinations of inviting someone to his house to

have a drink exemplify his increased alcohol consumption, as depicted in Figure 5.



Fig. 5. Dahmer hallucinates someone is with him.
 (“Doin’ A Dahmer” 00:27:31)

Figure 5 shows Dahmer, a heavy drinker, experiences hallucinations due to his frequent alcohol consumption. His psychological impact includes hallucinations of someone in his house. Dahmer's addiction to alcohol is evident in his uncaring behavior and the mess he leaves behind. His father Lionel and his newly married wife Shari find the house filled with beer cans, highlighting the destructive effects of alcohol on Dahmer's life. This is seen in Figure 6.



Fig. 6. Dahmer’s house is full of alcohol cans.
 (“The Good Boy Box” 00:08:05)

Figure 6 shows Dahmer's house is filled with alcohol cans and numerous beer cans, indicating his heavy alcohol consumption.

Recurrent alcohol use failing to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home.

The situation describes Dahmer being interviewed for a phlebotomist position at Milwaukee Blood Plasma, but in an interview, he stated that his alcoholism caused him to be removed from the army. This can be seen in the script episode 4.

INTERVIEWER. Oh wow, okay. You're probably a perfect fit then. I see you were honorably discharged. Can I ask why?

DAHMER. Uh Well, to be honest, I had a little trouble with alcohol. But, uh, I'm sober now. [10]

The marked dialogue reveals Dahmer's failure to fulfill work obligations, leading to his removal from the army due to alcohol abuse. He was honorably discharged for his drinking habits.

CAUSES OF ALCOHOL USE DISORDER

Dahmer's alcohol use disorder is attributed to environmental stress levels from his parents. He began drinking excessively as a coping mechanism for his stress, particularly after his parent's divorce, boredom, and being left alone. Dahmer's severe condition, as indicated by his six AUD symptoms, meets the criteria of a severe alcohol use disorder according to DSM-5-TR.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The study on Jeffrey Dahmer revealed his borderline personality disorder (BPD) and alcohol use disorder (AUD) as described in the DM: TJDS series. In this study, the writer found 15 data of borderline personality disorder, 8 data of alcohol use disorder and the total data of both disorders are 23 data. In borderline personality disorder, there are 6 types of symptoms with 13 data Dahmer experienced such as 5 frantic efforts, 1 unstable and intense interpersonal relationships, 3 identity disturbance, 2 impulsivity, 1 chronic feeling of emptiness, 1 intense anger or difficulty controlling anger, and 2 data of cause namely environmental (emotional neglect). Move to alcohol use disorder, there are 6 symptoms with 7 data such as 2 data on alcohol is often taken in larger amounts or over a longer period, 1 unsuccessful effort to cut down or control alcohol use, 1 great time spent in activities relating to alcohol, 1 recurrent alcohol use failing to fulfill major role obligations, 1 continued alcohol use, 1 tolerance increased amounts of alcohol and 1 data of environmental cause. The study reveals comorbidity between borderline personality disorder (BPD) and alcohol use disorder (AUD) in Dahmer. It can be seen that emotional instability in Dahmer leads him to have impulsivity which becomes a predictor of AUD in his BPD. Dahmer's dominant BPD symptoms include frantic effort, identity disturbance, and impulsivity, while his AUD symptoms involve long periods of alcohol use. Both disorders share environmental causes, and Dahmer's BPD and AUD are influenced by his parents' behavior and treatment.

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