

AN ANALYSIS OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD) REFLECTED IN THE MAIN CHARACTER OF JEFFREY DAHMER IN “MONSTER: JEFFREY DAHMER STORY” (2022)

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Abstract

This study is aimed to analyze the psychological condition of Dahmer as Post-Traumatic Stress disorder's sufferer reflected in “Monster: Jeffrey Dahmer Story” and the negative Impact of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) reflected in the main character. The study uses descriptive qualitative. The collecting data of the research method includes watching and reading, identifying, classifying, and selecting. The analyzing data of the research method by used displaying, explaining, and interpreting. The researcher analyzes the data by using Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Sigmund Freud Psychoanalysis. The result of the study: (1) the causes of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) reflected in the main character of Jeffrey Dahmer in “Monster: Jeffrey Dahmer Story” such as Physical, Sexual and Emotional Abuse, Violence in Children and Teens and Child Sexual Abuse; (2) the psychological condition of Jeffrey Dahmer as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder sufferer in form of Negative Reaction, Hyper Arousal Exposure to Stressor and re-experience event by using Sigmund Freud Psychoanalysis.(3) the negative impact of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) of Jeffrey Dahmer such as being a psychopath, cannibalism, mutilation and sexual abnormalities.

Keyword: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Psychoanalysis, Mental illness, Sexual Abnormalities, Cannibalism.

Introduction

Mental illness greatly affects a person's psychological condition. The negative impact of poor mental health such as trauma has so much impact on behavior, such as anxiety, insecurity, and their incapability in

seeking peace with themselves. Mental illness refers to a wide range of conditions that affect an individual's thoughts, emotions, and behavior. These conditions can range from mood disorders, such as depression and bipolar disorder, to psychotic disorders, such as schizophrenia, delusional disorder and Post Traumatic Disorder (PTSD).

Talking about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, researcher chose *Monster: Jeffrey Dahmer Story* based on true story as the object of analysis. Jeffrey Dahmer was coming of thriller also documentary movie. Not only telling about a trauma mental illness but also the movie is about bad parenting between child and parents, that is affect the childhood trauma and be a negative impact when he adult. In the film, Jeffrey Dahmer has a PTSD, one of the symptom are re-experience event. Child sexual abuse from his parents when he was child that causes his bad behavior such as sexual abnormalities. This is shown by his behavior when he was child that he like to collecting a body part especially corps and when he adult he have a necrophilia fetishism, LGBT, mutilation and cannibalism. From this problem, the researcher will discuss about how the causes of PTSD influence the psychological condition and some negative impact bad behavior reflected in *Monster: Jeffrey Dahmer Story 2022*.

Literary Review

Psychology of Literature

Psychology is a study about human's behavior, thought and feeling. Literature is a form of human expression based on human opinions, experiences, thoughts and feelings both in oral and written form, so, the psychology of literature is a scientific study that plays an important role in analyzing a literary work from a psychological perspective.

According to Wellek & Warren (1949:75), psychology of literature has a widely scope. In forming relationship between literature and psychology, the psychology of literature does not only focus on one element.

Psychology can enter the area of literary works through three aspects. First, understanding the psychological state of the author as an individual who has certain mental conditions that can affect the characters he creates. Second, understanding the psychology of the character through certain psychological elements from literary works.

Third, understanding the mental condition of the audience or literary readers. One of the branches of literary research is Psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is a study about personality and human nature. According to Freud (Calvin 1954) human have three mental system that are id (pleasure), ego (act, behavior) and super-ego (moral, ethical, values, parental). It can be assumed that the nature and behavior of people is carried out on the basis of motives without being aware or on the basis of thoughts, feelings, tend to do without conscious and partly being conscious.

a. Id

The id is the main component of human nature that has existed since humans were born. In addition, the id is defined as the operation of the subconscious. The id acts when someone does something impulsively. The id can't think, he only fantasizes or acts (Engler, 1997:34). According to Kirszner and Mandell (2010) the id impulses derived from the genetic background and concerned with the preservation and propagation's life. It operates unconsciously and it contains is pure of instinct, need and desire. The purpose of the id is just satisfying the desire (Feist, 2009:28).

b. Ego

The ego is also called the reality principle which tries to satisfy the id's desires in a realistic way. The ego ensures that the impulses of the id can be expressed in a way which is acceptable in reality. The establishment of the reality principle does not mean that the pleasure principle is abandoned. Fun is only blocked for a while for the sake of reality (Hock, 1998:27).

According to Freud (Feist, 2009:29) ego as the top area of personality is in charge to control the demand from id while considering the moral value from superego. Ego is decision maker of all things because ego is able to work in conscious, unconscious, even not conscious.

c. Superego

The superego also provides guidelines for making judgments about what is right or wrong, appropriate or not so that someone can do something according to the morals found in society. Freud (Calvin, 1954:81) stated that the desire for approval and the fear of punishment

lead the child to define himself by old moral advice. From there, the identification of parents leads to the formation of the superego.

There are two components of superego, first is conscience and the second is idea self. Conscience means punishing the ego if give an improper demands or it is about teaching the things not to do while idea self has the meaning like ideal personality. It means a thing which directs about what to the best things to do.

From the explanation above, especially in a very general way, the id may be thought of as the biological component of personality, the ego as the psychological component, and the superego as the social component.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Young, Kane, and Nicholson (2006: 55) explained about one of mental disorders which is PTSD is psychological disorders in the form of anxiety that occurs repeatedly marked by certain symptoms that caused by traumatic events in the past. Based on Gold (2017: 63-64), usually the emergence of trauma is only identical to the things related to the traumatic event that happened at that time, but there is also trauma that occurs after the traumatic event. Actually, not all traumas have the potential to become e PTSD. Trauma is categorized as PTSD when it begins to over-provoke or trigger the victim of a traumatic event (Nutt, Zohar, and Stein, 2008: 1).

The Causes of PTSD

Davidson (2006) states that there are some events which can lead to the emergence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, those are physical, sexual and emotional abuse. As a sufferer of PTSD, Jeffrey Dahmer had some bad experience in his childhood such as violence in Children and Teens

Negative Impact of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

A person with PTSD may experience emotional instability, impulsivity, and aggression, which can increase their engaging in harmful behavior towards others. PTSD is not kind of psychological disorder that comes out of nowhere, but is caused by a specific traumatic event.

Methods

This research is kind of descriptive qualitative research. In this research, researcher will conduct the process of analysis and the final result by applying a theory of psychoanalysis. The researcher does the psychoanalysis and analyzes the psychological condition, the causes of PTSD and the negative impact of PTSD reflected in *“Monster: Jeffrey Dahmer Story”* by describing using psychoanalytical approach. This research used descriptive qualitative as the research method for the data collected were in sentences and in not numbers. Then, the final of discussion and analysis is reported descriptively and delivered in sentences.

The source of data that had been used by the researcher is the data from a movie entitled Dahmer – *“Monster: Jeffrey Dahmer Story”*. This movie consist 10 series 8 hour 45 minutes long movie was directed and written by Ryan Murphy and Ian Brennan for Netflix, which was released on September 21, 2022. The data are taken in the form of dialogues in the movie. The data of this research is divided into two sources. The primary data is from words, phrases, clause, narration, or sentences in the movie and the English subtitle of *“Monster: Jeffrey Dahmer Story”(2019)* that the researcher is collected. The screenplay is written by Ryan Murphy.

In collecting data, the researcher applied several step such as watching and reading the script of the movie, identifying and classifying the data, and selecting the classified data. While in the analysis, the researcher conducted exposing, explaining, analyzing, and interpreting the selected data then making conclusion.

Findings and Discussions

The Main Character’s Cause of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Jeffrey Dahmer as the main character is clearly described as serial killer. PTSD may affect the psychological issues, Jeffrey Dahmer exhibited mental issues signs of psychopathy, borderline personality disorder, and paraphilic disorders. These conditions might have influenced his violent and deviant behavior. Mental condition can be seen by the symptoms of the experienced by Jeffrey Dahmer in *“Monster - Jeffrey Dahmer Story” (2022)*. Start from bullying when he was a child in his school

00:07:40,918 --> 00:07:42,170

Classmate : He's weird.

00:07:42,253 --> 00:07:44,464

Teacher : Kevin, we need to be nice to that boy.

00:07:45,298 --> 00:07:49,218

Teacher : I think there's some trouble at home. He could probably use a friend.

(S1:EP2 "Please don't go", 2022)

In the dialog, it is quite clear that Dahmer's childhood was very bleak, he really needed the love of his parents and friends. While he was considered strange and often bullied by his teacher friends and even his own parents.

During his childhood, young Jeffrey Dahmer was forced to live without his family. Jeffrey life alone since he was 18 years old, he lived at his parents' house while his parent abandoned him. The PTSD in Jeffrey can be seen as this following shows:

00:12:40,760 --> 00:12:43,804

Black man : Sorry, man. I think I'm gonna go.

00:12:45,306 --> 00:12:46,306

Jeffrey Dahmer : No.

00:12:48,184 --> 00:12:49,184

Jeffrey Dahmer : Don't leave.

00:12:52,188 --> 00:12:54,190

Jeffrey Dahmer : Why does everybody always wanna leave me?

00:12:55,566 --> 00:12:56,734

Black man : Leave you?

00:12:56,817 --> 00:13:00,529

Black man : What you mean, leave you? I need some fresh air. It stinks in here.

(S1:EP1 "Episode One". 2022)

The dialogue occurs when Jeffrey invites his black friend to go to his apartment the man wants to leave him, spontaneously Jeffrey expresses a negative reaction because he remembers that everyone around him wants to leave. Starting from offering a drink, but the black man refuses and seems not interested in the Jeffrey Dahmer house because the black people can't stand the stench in Jeffrey Dahmer's house. Then, Jeffrey Dahmer remember about his past. People with PTSD sometimes cannot accept something painful happening again, the trauma experienced by Jeffrey Dahmer has an impact into adulthood.

Negative Impact of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Jeffrey Dahmer was an American serial killer and sex offender. He committed a series of gruesome murders and acts of necrophilia and cannibalism between 1978 and 1991. Dahmer targeted young men and boys, often luring them to his apartment under the guise of offering them money or alcohol. Jeffrey Dahmer's case has been studied extensively by psychologists and criminologists. In the following explanation, we would discuss the causes of developing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the main character Jeffrey Dahmer on "*Monster: Jeffrey Dahmer Story (2022)*".

1. Psychopath

Psychopath is the person who diagnosed to have a psychopathic disorder. Most people would think about a serial murder killer when they heard the word of psychopath. Psychopathic commonly describes to have close relation with repetitive crime, violent behavior, and "cold-blooded violence. The psychopath considers as repetitive crime because psychopathic is a personality disorder which mean that this disorder were done in a rather long period of time and repeatedly for the psychopathic already be a part of the personality. Also the tendency of psychopath that commonly known to behave aggressively and impulsively makes this disorder related to crime. The psychopath is "cold-blooded" because psychopathic disorder patient have no empathy toward others and the lack of emotion and guilt make their actions become ruthless (Hare, Black and Walsh, 2013:230).

"One of those failed experiments at creating a living zombie was conducted on this 14-year-old boy. Jeffrey had drilled a hole in his head and poured in acid. A crude attempt at lobotomy that none of his victims survived."

From the statement above, Jeffrey Dahmer explained in detail about the dark fantasies he experienced when he killed someone. Jeffrey Dahmer explained that killing people and trying to make a zombie does not affect his feelings. This statement shows that he is a psychopath.

00:33:12,240 --> 00:33:17,828

Jeffrey Dahmer : Think it was around... age 14 or 15. Started to have...having obsessive...

00:33:21,374 --> 00:33:24,293

thoughts of...violence intermingled with sex.

00:33:30,091 --> 00:33:37,223

Host : Was it the killing that excited you Or was it what happened after the killing?

00:33:39,809 --> 00:33:42,937

Jeffrey Dahmer : No, the killing was just a means to an end. That was the least satiscasesy...That's why I tried to... create living zombies with...

(S1:EP9 "The Bogeyman". 2022)

This personality disorder is mostly developmental, beginning with the child phase when a child appear to be fail to socialize with other or even tend to act more impulsive that the other compeer. This means that antisocial and excessive impulsive action could be an indication of emerge of psychopathic. Strengthen those notion by defines the characteristics of psychopath as a person who showing peculiar "egoism, callousness, lying, impulsive and antisocial". It also happened on Jeffrey Dahmer case, Jeffrey Dahmer became a psychopath.

00:00:27,569 --> 00:00:31,031

in what appears to be a psychopathic mass murder.

00:00:31,114 --> 00:00:33,366

Police are questioning the suspect downtown.

00:00:33,450 --> 00:00:36,244

All we really know about him, a man with a criminal history

00:00:36,327 --> 00:00:38,538

of sexual assault of a teenage boy.

(S1:EP2 "Please don't go". 2022)

Psychopath are narcissistic, they believe that they were better than anybody else and that they do not have weaknesses. They believe that the other people are somehow bellows them in everything because people have weakness and on the contrary, they were not. Jeffrey Dahmer as psychopath also thinks that he is better

than others, while in prison Jeffrey showed off how he ate meat as if he was eating human flesh. The narcissistic character of Jeffrey Dahmer can be seen as follows:

00:03:27,457 --> 00:03:30,293

Dahmer : You ever notice how this looks just like a human thumb?

00:03:33,213 --> 00:03:35,757

Dahmer : At least that's how they look when I was done with 'em. No, actually, more like this.

00:03:46,517 --> 00:03:48,603

Other prisoners: You're a fucking freak, dude. Sit your white ass down!

00:03:53,900 --> 00:03:55,318

Prisoners : I don't like that, son.

00:04:01,616 --> 00:04:02,909

Dahmer : My fans do.

(S1: EP9 "The Bogeyman". 2022)

2. Mutilation & Cannibalism

The appearance of negative impact to someone who has PTSD may experience emotional instability, impulsivity, and aggression, which can increase their engagement in harmful behavior towards others one of them are the crime that involves physical violence such as looting mutilation and cannibalism.

In one scene, Jeffrey Dahmer's neighbor called Glenda slowly approached the window and heard the sound of a saw coming from Jeffrey Dahmer's house. Glenda began to suspect that Jeffrey Dahmer was mutilating human flesh. The next scene shows Jeffrey washing his bloodstained hands.

00:03:24,746 --> 00:03:27,498

Glenda : I gotta say, that smell is worse than ever. Is it?

00:03:33,421 --> 00:03:36,382

Jeffrey Dahmer : Well, y'know, I had that meat that went bad in that little freezer I got.

00:03:38,509 --> 00:03:39,886

Glenda : No, you said that last week, and I saw
you go out to the dumpster and throw
out a whole bunch of bad meat,

00:03:44,015 --> 00:03:45,934

Glenda : so the smell should be gone by now.
(S1:EP1 "Episode One". 2022)

The dialogue took a place in front of the apartment. Glenda complained to Jeffrey Dahmer about the strong stench in Dahmer's apartment, without explaining it in Dahmer's house there were decomposing human bodies. Glenda had long been suspicious and called the police, but because Glenda was black the police ignored her. It was clear that Jeffrey mutilated his victims and did not dispose of the decomposing human flesh. He then returns to the apartment with a black gay friend,

Jeffrey intended to kill the man. But this time Jeffrey was unlucky. He was about to anesthetize the man by giving him a drink with sleeping pills. However, this black man was athletic enough that the drugs given had no effect on him. He ran away and reported it to the police.

00:41:11,469 --> 00:42:26,835

"I'm just gonna tell you right now, this is gonna be difficult to hear. Mr. Dahmer. There was a human head in his refrigerator. Two plastic bags in the freezer. Each containing a human heart. Another containing a set of male genitalia. In the bedroom, there was five more skulls. Knives and hammers and saws and Polaroids documenting the dismemberments. In another drawer, we found a complete human skeleton, the bones had been bleached. A dried scalp. And then a 57- gallon vat Filled with acid. Inside were three torsos in various stages of decomposition, as well as other body parts"

(S1:EP1 "Episode One". 2022)

From the section above, we are able to know that the officers clearly explained about details of the cruelty and sadism committed by Jeffrey Dahmer to his father. In the dialogue had

explained not only killed and mutilated his victims, Jeffrey also ate the flesh of his victims.

In psychology literature, cannibalism refers to the behavior of consuming the flesh or internal organs of other individuals of the same species. While cannibalism can occur naturally in some animal species, it is considered a rare and aberrant behavior in humans, and is typically associated with extreme situations such as war, famine, or survival in isolated environments.

[reporter 2] : "Murder, mutilation, even cannibalism"

[reporter 3] : "Shock and horror, as police carry out a large cooking kettle in the biggest and most gruesome mass murder case in Milwaukee history"

(Conversation with a Killer S1:EP1 "Sympathy for the Devil")

From the dialogue above, it is clear that Jeffrey Dahmer was being a cannibal. This could be seen in this following conversation, between Glenda and Linda.

00:04:47,662 --> 00:04:49,539

Glenda : You ever smell a dead body, Linda?

00:04:50,665 --> 00:04:52,166

Linda : No.

Glenda : I have.

00:04:52,667 --> 00:04:54,669

Glenda : Jeffrey was cooking 'em up next door.

The dialogue took place when Glenda and Linda watch television and it show that Jeffrey Dahmer has interview about his crime.

Cannibalism is a rare and extreme behavior in humans, and the vast majority of individuals who exhibit symptoms of mental illness or other disorders do not engage in cannibalistic behavior. However, in cases where cannibalism does occur, there may be certain key symptoms or behaviors that are present. Some potential symptoms of Jeffrey Dahmer cannibalism may include: Obsessive thoughts or fantasies about cannibalism, including preoccupation with the act of eating human flesh or internal organs.

00:16:57,307 --> 00:17:00,144
Did you think Jeffrey Dahmer was going to eat you?
00:17:00,936 --> 00:17:01,936
Yeah.
00:17:03,856 --> 00:17:04,856
I did.
00:17:07,443 --> 00:17:09,236
He said he was going to eat my heart.
(S1:E8 "Lionel". 2022)

Conclusion

The bullying experienced by Dahmer during his childhood and teen is one of the causes of his post-traumatic stress disorder. He got it from his friends. He also had troubled upbringing from his parents and surrounding family. These led to his PTSD.

PTSD gives bad impact to the character. His symptoms include psychopathic behavior and mutilation as well cannibalism. The three symptoms are clearly seen and shown throughout the movie.

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