



**BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER
AND ALCOHOL USE DISORDER
IN DAHMER-MONSTER: THE JEFFREY DAHMER STORY SERIES**

THESIS

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This is to certify the originality of this thesis which I now submit to fulfill a requirement for an S1 in The English Department Faculty of Humanities Universitas Bung Hatta. The content of this thesis is entirely my work. All assistance received in writing this thesis and the sources cited have been acknowledged within the text of my work.

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ABSTRACT

The study examines Dahmer's borderline personality disorder, alcohol use disorder, and the causes as they are portrayed in the *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* television 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. From nine symptoms of borderline personality disorder (BPD), the writer found there are 6 types of BPD symptoms experienced by Dahmer namely frantic efforts, unstable and intense interpersonal relationships, identity disturbance, impulsivity, chronic feelings of emptiness, and intense anger or difficulty controlling anger. For alcohol use disorder (AUD), from eleven symptoms, the writer found there are 6 symptoms of AUD Dahmer experienced such as alcohol is 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 failing to fulfill major role obligations, continued alcohol use, and tolerance increased amounts of alcohol. For the causes of both disorders, Dahmer's BPD and AUD are affected by his environment. Emotional neglect is the only cause of his BPD, while stress level is the cause of his AUD. Dahmer's BPD was visible from the symptoms he experienced. Especially frantic efforts, identity disturbance, and impulsivity. Frantic effort was very dominant because Dahmer was afraid of being abandoned, so he made frantic efforts to make other people stay with him. Identity disturbance is also dominant because Dahmer is ignored by everyone, causing him to have no self-identity. Impulsivity, as the final dominant symptom, became Dahmer's inadequate technique for managing the depressed feelings he had after being neglected and abandoned. At

the same time, Dahmer's AUD was characterized by a predominance of alcohol, which was often consumed in larger quantities or over longer periods time. Dahmer, who already had feelings of depression after his parents neglected him, drank a lot of alcohol as a way to manage his emotions. 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

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Life is filled with numerous occurrences that occur from the past to the present. As a human being, these various events stimulate curiosity to know and understand the reasons behind their happening. To satisfy this curiosity, it can be analyzed by using psychology. Psychology is defined broadly as the science of behavior and mental processes (Gray et al. 6). Psychology is the study of conscious and unconscious phenomena such as emotions, thoughts, and motivations (Henriques 1212). 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 (285).

Literary psychology is associated with the implementation of psychological concepts to improve the clarity of issues in literary works and the investigation of fictional characters' emotions, motivations, and behaviors. Psychological ideas and theories are employed to get an improved understanding of the minds of people as portrayed in literary works (Dar 288). Psychological content can be found in various genres, including poetry, short stories, novels, and dramas (Yimer 162). Reading and studying the psychology of literature can help gain a better understanding of how psychological theory can be used to learn human behavior through literary works.

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 (Totawad and Ramrao 151). When the visual and auditory elements of a film are combined with the narrative, they can produce intense emotional experiences (Kwon et al. 1). In addition, film scholars apply psychological techniques to investigate how films elicit emotions and explore the human psyche (Wiley 171).

In discussing the film, the writer examines the main character in the television series *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story (DM: TJDS)* in the study. This series is based on the true story of a serial killer named Jeffrey Dahmer. It depicts his life journey of murdering his victims. Jeffrey Dahmer was born in Milwaukee on May 21, 1960. He was a quiet child who had a bleak childhood and grew up in a bad environment. Because of this condition, he became a serial killer and sex offender who as an adult was charged with 17 murders. In this series, Jeffrey Dahmer gets the most attention as the main character.

This television series highlights aspects of Jeffrey Dahmer's mental health issues, such as borderline personality disorder and alcohol use disorder based on a true story. These mental health issues experienced by real person then become the reason the writer is interested in analyzing Jeffrey Dahmer and choosing the series. Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is a medical problem where an individual has a very difficult time controlling their relationships and emotions (Kulacaoglu and Kose 1).

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 (*NIAA 1*).

Moreover, according to Shen, studies have shown individuals diagnosed with BPD frequently have several co-occurring psychiatric disorders as well as physical comorbidities (2). Castillo claimed AUD and BPD have a substantial degree of comorbidity (5). 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 (*Sensu 25*).

One study has been previously done by Laksono (2020) based on the film *My Friend Jeffrey Dahmer* stated Dahmer suffers from a mental health problem called personality disorder (PD). Meanwhile, the writer of this study uses the Netflix original series *DM: TJDS* as a source of data and focuses analysis on BPD and AUD on the main character (Jeffrey Dahmer), making it different from previous studies in that regard. This study hopefully can be used as another source of the next studies for those who are interested in analyzing borderline personality disorder and alcohol use disorder.

1.2 Research Question

1. How are Dahmer's borderline personality disorder symptoms and causes depicted in *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* series?
2. How are Dahmer's alcohol use disorder symptoms and causes depicted in *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* series?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The following are the research objectives according to the questions raised above:

1. To describe Dahmer's borderline personality disorder symptoms and causes depicted in *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* series.
2. To describe Dahmer's alcohol use disorder symptoms and causes depicted in *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* series.

1.4 Scope of the Study

To narrow the focus of the study and provide an answer to the research question, the writer only analyses six episodes in DM: TJDS series. The reason is that the BPD and AUD of Dahmer are only featured in episodes one through six of the first season of the series. The writer also adopted a psychological approach, concentrating on the symptoms, causes, and comorbidity of BPD and AUD.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of the study should be helpful from a theoretical and practical point. The goal of these studies is to theoretically enrich the theoretical foundations of literary studies. Particularly, those that connect to the psychological component of literary work because the study's findings reveal new interesting studies.

Practically speaking, this study would provide knowledge and information on alcohol use disorder and borderline personality disorder. Therefore, students who are particularly interested in the psychoanalysis of borderline personality and alcohol use disorder especially those studying English would benefit from this study. In addition, the reader also has a thorough understanding of BPD and AUD as depicted in the DM:TJDS series. With the help of this study, the writer intends to provide information that helps students comprehend literary works from a variety of angles, especially psychological ones. On top of that, the writer believes that the information might be used once more by students who wish to conduct similar analyses.