



**THE PORTRAYAL OF JEFFREY DAHMER'S PSYCHOPATHY AS SEEN IN
*DAHMER – MONSTER: THE JEFFREY DAHMER STORY SERIES***

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This is to certify the originality of this thesis I submitted to fulfil a requirement for a S1 degree in the English Department Faculty of Humanities Universitas Bung Hatta. This thesis is entirely mine and there are no works or opinions written or published by other people except as reference or quotations by following the usual scientific writing procedures.

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the portrayal of Jeffrey Dahmer's psychopathy as represented in the Netflix series *Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*. The study applies a qualitative descriptive method using Robert D. Hare's theory of psychopathy to identify both symptoms and causes of Dahmer's psychological condition. The findings reveal that Dahmer demonstrates emotional and interpersonal traits such as glibness, superficial charm, egocentrism, deceitfulness, manipulation, shallow emotions, lack of empathy, and lack of remorse. Additionally, lifestyle symptoms including impulsivity, poor behavioral control, irresponsibility, and a constant need for excitement further reinforce his psychopathic profile. The causes of these traits are largely associated with nurture factors, particularly Dahmer's unstable family environment, emotional neglect, parental conflict, rejection, and social alienation during his formative years. The series illustrates how these environmental influences, combined with Dahmer's personality traits, contribute to his antisocial and destructive behavior. This study contributes to the psychology of literature by providing insights into how psychopathy is depicted in film and television, thereby enriching discussions of character development, narrative representation, and media portrayals of mental illness and crime.

Keywords: *Jeffrey Dahmer, psychopathy, psychology of literature*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

All individuals possess both a physical component related to the body and an intangible, psychic aspect often referred to as the "soul." True health, both physical and mental, is achieved when these two elements are in balance and functioning optimally. Illness, however, is not limited solely to physical ailments; it can also manifest within the psyche, the inner realm of the mind and consciousness. The scientific discipline dedicated to the study of the mind, its processes, and the resultant human behavior is known as psychology. The term "psychology" is derived from the Greek word "*psyche*" meaning "life," and "*logos*," signifying "explanation". This field of study is concerned with comprehending the full spectrum of the human experience, encompassing not only the observable physical facets but also the complex and often elusive intricacies of the human psyche (Hare 22).

Psychopathy is a complex and multifaceted psychological condition that has long been the subject of extensive research and clinical observation. The term "psychopathy" was originally used to describe aggressive and irresponsible behavior, though the concept has evolved over time and become associated with a range of distinct personality traits and behavioral patterns (Buzina 134–135). In regard to this, Hare asserts that at the core of psychopathy is a profound lack of empathy and the capacity for genuine emotional connection, as psychopaths are often characterized as predatory individuals who manipulate and exploit others solely for the purpose of satisfying their own egocentric needs and desires (Hare).

This disturbing psychological profile has been the subject of extensive research and clinical observation, with psychologists and psychiatrists seeking to better understand the underlying mechanisms and causes of this condition. One key aspect of psychopathy is the

ability of individuals with this condition to appear outwardly normal and blend seamlessly into society, making them difficult to identify (Hintjens 2). Cleckley in Buzina (2012) denotes that psychopaths may not necessarily engage in criminal acts, but they often exhibit a concerning array of socially and morally problematic behaviors, including a pronounced lack of remorse, shallow emotional responses, and an impersonal, detached approach to personal relationships, this ability to present a veneer of normalcy while concealing a disturbing psychological reality has long fascinated researchers and the general public alike (Buzina).

The way how psychopathy itself represented may various, as for this phenomenon represented through such literary products as a Netflix TV series entitled *Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* Series. The series focuses on the life of Jeffrey Dahmer, and how he became one of the most notorious serial killers in America. The series is taken from the real story of a white man called Dahmer, that happened between 1987 and 1991. The serial killer case was finally revealed in Milwaukee in 1991 with the total of 17 victims. The series provides a powerful example of psychopathy in action, offering viewers a direct and thought-provoking portrayal of a dangerous individual who was able to conceal his true nature from those around him. By highlighting this case study, the series aims to raise awareness and foster a sense of vigilance among people of all ages, as Verstappen underlined that psychopathy can manifest in the closest of relationships and pose a significant threat (5). The representation of psychopathy in this series is particularly relevant to the field of literary psychology, which examines the interconnections between psychological concepts and their artistic depiction. By studying how literature, including film and television, portrays the complexities of human behavior and the inner workings of the mind, researchers can gain valuable insights into the human condition and the ways in which psychology is reflected in the creative arts.

Therefore, by studying how this series as a part of literary products copes with the complexities of human behaviour and the inner workings of the mind, the writer can gain valuable insights into the human condition and the ways in which psychology is both reflected and explored through various forms of creative expression. Moreover, this interdisciplinary approach allows for a deeper understanding of the darkest impulses of the human psyche and the ways in which they can manifest in the cultural narratives we collectively consume and contemplate as movie and TV series.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the research background, questions need to be asked regarding the research aims as follows:

1. How are the symptoms of psychopathy portrayed by Jeffrey Dahmer in the series *Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*?
2. How are the causes of psychopathy portrayed by Jeffrey Dahmer in the series *Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the research questions, the writer aims to answer the research questions as follows:

1. To describe the symptoms of psychopathy shown by Jeffrey Dahmer in the series *Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*.
2. To describe the causes of psychopathy shown by Jeffrey Dahmer in the series *Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*.

1.4 Scope of the Study

Jeffrey Dahmer, the main character, serves as the mere subject of analysis in this study. In addition, this movie can be studied on various topics such as intrinsics, sociology, and psychology. The writer analyses psychology and only focuses on psychopathy, which comes under the category of personality disorders. The writer examined the symptoms and

causes that contributed to the main characters' development of psychopathy using Hare's theory.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research has theoretical benefits in broadening one's understanding in psychoanalysis sub-field as psychopathy. This study is expected to help in understanding how a TV series communicates complexities of human behaviors through characterization. Furthermore, this study is expected to benefit in providing references for other students, particularly for English Department students who are interested in such psychological analysis subfields as psychopathy.

The writer expects that this research may lead the readers to better comprehend the psychopathy sub-field as one of human nature. The writer believes that this research would assist and stimulate students to perform additional research on psychopathy represented on various objects found on other media platforms.