BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER DEPICTED IN THE MAIN CHARACTER OF THE NETFLIX SERIES *YOU*

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THE MAIN CHARACTER OF THE NETFLIX SERIES *YOU*

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the main character, Joe Goldberg, who exhibits symptoms of borderline personality disorder as they are portrayed in the Netflix series *You*. The study applied borderline personality disorder theory in The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR). The writer employed a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the data. Joe exhibited 6 symptoms from nine symptoms of BPD. Particularly, unstable and intense relationships, impulsivity, frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment, chronic feelings of emptiness, and identity disturbance. Unstable relationships and impulsivity are the most dominant symptoms. Identity disturbance is the least dominant symptom. There are two causing factors of BPD, namely, genetic and environmental factors. It was found that Joe's BPD caused by environmental factor. The environmental factors are emotional neglect, neglect, and physical abuse. Emotional neglect is the most dominant factor that caused Joe's BPD. Neglect and physical abuse are the second dominant factors. In conclusion, Joe's childhood environment factors, such as emotional neglect had a major impact on the development of his BPD. Emotional neglect linked to several BPD symptoms Joe exhibited, namely unstable interpersonal relationships, identity disturbance, and chronic feelings of emptiness. Because of neglect in supervision during his childhood, Joe showed BPD symptom of frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment. The physical abuse that Joe experienced as a child shows his impulsivity and transient stress-related to paranoid ideation or dissociative symptoms.

Keywords: Main character, Borderline Personality Disorder, Symptoms, and Environmental Factors

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Mental disorder is a syndrome described by a clinically significant disruption in a person's behavior, emotion regulation, or thought processes that indicates a malfunction in the biological development, or psychological mechanism underlying mental functioning. Mental disorder are typically linked to severe distress or impairment in social, professional, or other crucial tasks (American Psychiatric Association 14). American Psychiatric Association (APA) in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), categorized mental disorder into specific categorises, including borderline personality disorder (BPD).

Borderline personality disorder (BPD) based on National Institute of Mental Health, is a serious mental illness characterized by unstable moods, behavior, relationships, and self-image. It involves impulsive actions and problems in relationships, along with intense episodes of anger, depression, and anxiety. BPD characterized by efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment, a pattern of intense and unstable relationships, distorted and unstable self-image or sense of self, recurring suicidal behaviors or threats or self-harming behavior, intense and highly changeable moods, chronic feelings of emptiness, inappropriate, intense anger or difficulty controlling anger and transient, stress-related paranoid ideation (American Psychiatric Association

753). The prevalence rate of borderline personality disorder in the U.S general population is 1.4% (Lenzenwegger et al. 556). The National Comorbidity Survey Replication (NCS-R) was conducted by trained professional staff from the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research from February 2001 to December 2003 (553). Borderline Personality Disorder affects 6% of patients in primary care, around 10% of those receiving outpatient mental health services, and approximately 20% of individuals hospitalized in psychiatric facilities (American Psychiatric Association 755). The significant number of individuals affected by BPD and the elevated risk of suicide strongly support the urgent need for effective and widely accessible treatment options (Bateman and Fonagy 11). In the psychology of literature, understanding mental disorders like BPD helps uncover how psychological realities are represented, shaped, and interpreted through fictional narratives.

Ayesha Dar stated that the concept of literary psychology refers to an interdisciplinary approach that merges the analysis of literature with psychological theory (285). The study of human behavior, including both internal and external behavior, is known as psychology. (287). According to Fathali M. Moghaddam, literature can be seen as a source of psychological data in all its forms, particularly in novels, plays, and poetry. As a first step toward a deeper comprehension of creativity, the act of writing itself could be examined. (507). Analyzing literature through a psychological lens provides a

deeper comprehension of how psychological theories can be employed to examine and interpret human behavior within literary works.

Literature can be understood as a form of written communication, whether expressed through poetry, drama, or fiction, as it conveys human experiences using narrative techniques. On the other hand, film focuses on spoken communication, with sound playing a dominant role in its storytelling. Both written and spoken communication serve as essential means through which people gain knowledge and wisdom throughout their lives (Ramrao 150). While literature develops verbal literacy, films cultivate visual literacy. In this sense, literature and film are interconnected, with film often regarded as an extension or branch of literature (151).

In this study, *You* is chosen as the subject of this study on borderline personality disorder (BPD). *You* is a psychological thriller series about Joe Goldberg, a man with a history of obsession and violence towards women he becomes romantically interested in. Each season, he develops a new fixation, using his knowledge of technology and social media to manipulate and control his chosen woman's life, often removing perceived obstacles through increasingly dark methods. Moreover, the reaches a 7,7/10 rating from IMDb, indicating that the show is amazing and recommended to watch. IMDb is one of the most popular movie rating websites in the world. Furthermore, the movie is representative of the psychological disorder. Then, the main character, Joe Goldberg, frequently illustrates the symptoms of a person who has a borderline personality disorder through his behavior and monologue. By

focusing on the main character, Joe Goldberg, in the series *You*, this study aims to examine how BPD is represented in media and how such portrayals can influence public understanding of the disorder.

The reason borderline personality disorder is the focus of this study because this series provides portrayal of psychological symptoms that align with BPD through fictional character. By examining BPD helps bridge psychology and literature by showing how mental illness is represented in series. It also allows for a deeper understanding of how fictional character can exhibit the symptoms.

Several studies explore borderline personality disorder within the field of psychology, often focusing on symptoms, causes, and treatment methods. However, this study takes a different approach by examining how BPD is portrayed in series. Instead of analyzing BPD from a medical perspective, this study investigates how the disorder is represented through a fictional character, offering insight into the public perceptions and media interpretations of mental disorders. With an increasing focus on mental health in media and society, analyzing characters like Joe Goldberg can contribute to a broader understanding of BPD and encourage discussions about mental health awareness. This study serves as an additional source for future research for those interested in studying borderline personality disorder.

1.2 Research Question

1. How are the symptoms of borderline personality disorder portrayed in the main character in the Series *You*?

2. How are the environmental factors of borderline personality disorder in the main character portrayed in the Series *You*?

1.3 Objective of the Study

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

1. To describe the symptoms of Joe's borderline personality disorder in the Series *You*.

2. To describe the environmental factors of Joe's borderline personality disorder in the Series *You*.

1.4 Scope of the Study

In the series *You,* several male and female characters are portrayed as experiencing various forms of mental disorders. These characters exhibit a range of symptoms and behavior that suggest underlying mental health issues. However, this study focuses on the main character, Joe Goldberg, who consistently displays symptoms associated with BPD. The writer chose to focus on borderline personality disorder as portrayed through the character Joe Goldberg. The writer only analyses a few episodes in the series. The reason is that the borderline personality disorder of character Joe Goldberg is only featured in several episodes of the five seasons of the series. The writer also

took a psychological approach, emphasizing the environmental factor and symptoms of BPD.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of the study could be useful from both a theoretical and a practical point. The purpose of this research is to theoretically enhance literary studies' theoretical basis. The result of the study suggests new, relevant research, particularly those that deal with the literary works' psychological component. This study would provide information about borderline personality disorder. Thus, this study would be beneficial to students who are particularly interested in learning about borderline personality disorder. Furthermore, the reader gets a depth understanding of BPD as they are portrayed in the *You* series. The author hopes that this study helps people understand literary works from several perspectives, particularly psychological ones. In addition, the writer assumes that students who want to conduct similar analyses could employ the knowledge in this study.