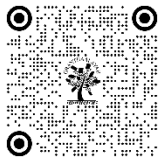


DEEP DOWN HUMAN MINDS: UNLEASHING THE ASPECTS OF TRAUMA AND PTSD IN 13 REASONS WHY

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ABSTRACT

Trauma, in its various forms, is a pervasive theme in modern storytelling, and Netflix's 13 Reasons Why offers a compelling exploration of its psychological and emotional impact on individuals, particularly through the experiences of its characters. This article probes into the multidimensional portrayal of trauma in the popular Netflix series 13 Reasons Why. The paper examines how various forms of mental trauma, including bullying, sexual assault, depression, and anxiety, are depicted through the experiences of the characters. The primary focus is on the main protagonist, Hannah Baker, whose traumatic experiences are portrayed in a realistic and often graphic manner. The paper analyzes the emotional and psychological consequences of these experiences on Hannah's mental health, offering insights into the broader implications of such issues in real life. It underscores the need for understanding and addressing mental health challenges, particularly those rooted in traumatic experiences, as portrayed in media.

Keywords: Trauma, Mental health, Depression, Anxiety

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Esther Giller, psychological trauma is a unique individual experience of something or some enduring conditions where the individual's experiences become a threat to life and sanity. It overwhelms the individual's ability to cope and leaves that person feeling destroyed resulting in self-harm and psychosis. Trauma of anykind is generated from abuse of power, betrayal of trust, helplessness, pain, confusion and loss. Trauma studies have its foundation in psychological trauma where memory plays a pivotal role in forming an individual's personal and cultural identity. Psychoanalytic theories on trauma paired with additional theoretical frameworks such as post structural, socio cultural and postcolonial theory form the basis of criticism that interprets representations of an extreme experience and its effects upon identity and memory. The concept of trauma is generally understood as a severely disruptive experience that impacts an individual's emotional organization and perception of the external world. Trauma studies explores the impact of trauma in literature and society by analyzing its psychological, rhetorical and cultural significance.

Literature and visual culture always represented trauma in myriad ways. Ranging from poetry to speculative fiction trauma is a main theme in all genres of literature. Contemporary literature and visual culture addresses the issues of trauma in an altogether different light from the yesteryear literature. Unlike the earlier times where it set the background for character development, any type of trauma the character had experienced became the main aspect of the narrative.

This paradigm shift is evident when we observe how the issue of trauma and post trauma is discussed in recent films and series. For instance the film *Pianist*(2002) to *The Invisible Man* (2020) one can see how trauma is becomes the narrative itself.

13 Reasons Why is a Netflix original series based on the 2007 novel by Jay Asher. The show premiered on March 31, 2017, and ran for four seasons. Season 1 of *13 Reasons Why* follows the story of Hannah Baker, a high school student who commits suicide. Before her death, she records 13 cassette tapes, each one dedicated to a person whom she believes contributed to her decision to take her own life. The show follows the perspective of Clay Jensen, one of the people on the tapes,' as he listens to each one and learns more about what led to Hannah's tragic end. The series has around 50 episodes ranging to 4 seasons. Season 1 portrays Hanna's death and its immediate results through the cassette tapes. Season 2 explores how the death affects the people around her including Hanna's parents. Season 3 revolves around the murder of Bryce Walker, one of the antagonists and the mysterious killer who killed him. Season 4 follows each character and the lingering PTSD. The series discusses the issue of trauma , PTSD and the idea of healing in all its four seasons.

The first season is an intense and emotional journey that deals with important topics such as bullying, sexual assault, mental health, and suicide. The later seasons discusses the idea of mental health and healing. It received critical acclaim for its powerful performances and tackling of sensitive issues, but also faced controversy for its graphic depictions of suicide and sexual assault. Despite the criticisms, the show sparked serious discussions on mental health. Questions of parental and institutional involvement became an important topic of discussion. At the same time psychologists and mental wellness experts criticized the series for its handling of grave topics like suicide and trauma.

"Sometimes I feel like I'm screaming and no one can hear me. I'm not saying that people should feel sorry for me. I'm just saying that people should understand there's more going on than what meets the eye. There's a lot more going on inside."- Hannah Baker, Season 1, Episode 7, 30:45. This dialogue by Hanna reflects her condition and mental stress she is going through. Hanna goes through different types of trauma physical, where she is raped by one of her classmates. She is bullied by her peers in the form of body shaming, name calling and spreading rumors and physical aggression. Hanna is a victim of emotional abuse too. She is isolated by her friends. This adds to her loneliness and hopelessness. . For example, her former friend, Jessica, begins dating her crush, Justin, and the two of them exclude Hannah from their social group, leading her to feel rejected and alone. "I guess that's what happens when a tornado meets a volcano. All I remember is Jessica's face, and the feeling of being pushed aside. They were connecting, and I was getting in the way."- Hannah Baker, Season 1, Episode 11, 34:55.

Throughout the series, Hanna's cry for support remains unheard. Her parents are largely absent from her life, and her friends are too preoccupied with their own problems to offer her the support she needs. This lack of support exacerbates her feelings of isolation and hopelessness, leading her to feel as though she has no other option but to take her own life. Overall, the suicide of Hannah Baker is the result of a complex interplay of traumatic experiences and a lack of support. These traumatic experiences and the resulting mental health challenges can be devastating and require support and intervention from mental health professionals and loved ones. The series highlights the importance of addressing the underlying causes of suicide and the need for more comprehensive support systems for individuals who are struggling with mental health challenges.

Hannah baker exhibits several symptoms of trauma throughout the story. These symptoms include emotional numbness, where she appears detached and emotionally numb after experiencing traumatic events. Hannah also experiences vivid and intrusive memories of traumatic events, which can be triggered by various stimuli. She displays avoidance behavior by avoiding situations, people, or places that remind her of her traumatic experiences. Additionally, she experiences symptoms of depression, such as feelings of hopelessness, sadness, and a lack of interest in her usual activities. Hannah also experiences anxiety and panic attacks, particularly when she is triggered by reminders of her trauma. She engages in self-harm behaviors as a coping mechanism, including cutting herself, and experiences thoughts of suicide, which ultimately lead to her taking her own life. It's important to note that everyone experiences trauma differently, and not everyone will exhibit the same symptoms as Hannah. Seeking professional help from a mental health provider is crucial for those experiencing trauma to receive the support and care they need.

While she attempted to deal with her experiences, her coping mechanisms were not healthy or effective. Hannah withdrew from friends and family, engaged in unhealthy coping mechanisms such as self-harm, drinking, and drug use, and sought revenge by creating a series of tapes detailing those involved in her trauma. Additionally, she attempted to escape reality by running away and fantasizing about a better life. However, these methods only provided temporary

relief and did not address the underlying trauma. It's essential to seek professional help from a mental health provider who can provide effective coping strategies and support for those experiencing trauma.

Hannah's decision to take her own life was influenced by several characteristics of her personality. Her isolation after experiencing trauma and betrayal led to her withdrawal from friends and family, making it difficult for her to receive support and care from others. Her high expectations and perfectionism, coupled with blaming herself for what had happened to her, contributed to her feelings of worthlessness and disappointment. She also felt a lack of control over her life and experiences, which may have added to her sense of hopelessness and despair. While these characteristics may have played a role in Hannah's decision to take her own life, there were also external factors, such as bullying and betrayal that contributed to her trauma and despair. Suicide is a complex issue with multiple causes, and it's important to create a supportive and understanding community that can help individuals to process and heal from traumatic experiences. Seeking professional help from a mental health provider is also crucial in addressing suicidal ideation and other mental health concerns.

Unfortunately, Hannah did not receive adequate support when she faced the traumatic events in "Thirteen Reasons Why." Although some characters attempted to be there for her, they were not able to provide the level of support and care she needed to cope with her trauma effectively. Hannah's attempts to reach out for help, such as talking to Mr. Porter, also did not result in the support she needed. Mr. Porter, Hannah's school guidance counselor, failed to provide her with the necessary support and resources she needed to cope with her trauma.

"I needed someone, and the only person I could think of was you, but you proved me wrong. And that's the worst feeling in the world." - Hannah Baker, Season 1, Episode 12, at 31:37.

This quote is from the scene when Hannah reached out to him for help, Mr. Porter did not fully listen to her or take her concerns seriously. He failed to understand the severity of her situation and did not provide her with the necessary support or referrals for further help. Furthermore, Mr. Porter did not follow the proper protocol for handling Hannah's situation. He did not document their conversation or report it to the appropriate authorities, which could have helped Hannah receive the support she needed. Mr. Porter also gave Hannah the impression that she was responsible for what had happened to her, which further contributed to her feelings of hopelessness and isolation. Overall, Mr. Porter's failure to provide Hannah with adequate support and guidance contributed to her decision to take her own life. It highlights the importance of having well-trained and empathetic mental health professionals who can provide effective support and resources to those who are experiencing trauma. It is important to approach sensitive topics with empathy, compassion, and a willingness to listen and learn. It's essential to listen to and believe survivors and to provide them with the necessary resources and support to help them heal and move forward.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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