

Jaegu Song's Borderline Personality Disorder in the Webtoon *Girls of the Wild's*

Suzatte Siphra Kezia Tandidatu¹, Liem Satya Limanta²

English Department, Faculty of Humanities and Creative Industries, Petra Christian University,
Siwalankerto 121-131, Surabaya 60236, INDONESIA
E-mail: keziasiphra@gmail.com; satya@petra.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the classification of Jaegu Song's borderline personality disorder in the webtoon *Girls of the Wild's*. This thesis will use borderline personality disorder theory to analyze Jaegu Song's behavior and the change in his personality by looking at his actions, dialogues, monologues, and flashbacks. This study analyzes what mental illness Jaegu Song suffered from by finding the symptoms, causes, and effects according to borderline personality disorder theory. It shows that in the webtoon *Girls of the Wild's*, Jaegu Song suffered from Borderline Personality Disorder. It can be found that someone might have developed a specific mental illness, even when they appeared to be alright or showed a relatively normal behavior, and sometimes there must be some reasoning on why someone might be seen as problematic or seen as a bad person.

Keywords: borderline personality disorder; mental illness; personality; behavior

INTRODUCTION

According to Kim (2015), from the 1990s, the Korean Wave started to become big outside South Korea itself. Aside from books, a Korean digital manhwa/comic called webtoon also brings the Korean Wave even more widespread. A hidden gem webtoon called *Girls of The Wild's* (*소녀더와일즈* *the Wild's Sonyeodeowailjeu*) was a hit that receive around 102,500,000 viewers with the rate of 9,78 out of 10 in Indonesian Webtoon Application, according to the Line Webtoon (2022). This Korean webtoon was translated into many languages, including Bahasa Indonesia. This drama/romance/comedy webtoon brings a story of students in martial art high school called Wild Private School. Due to some reasons, the school that was an all-female school was changed into a co-ed school. The protagonist, Jaegu Song, was a male student who received the opportunity to get a full scholarship to the Wild Private School and then became the first and the only male student in the school. Throughout his life, Jaegu Song usually stayed lowkey, did not protest, did not easily get angry nor sad. However, during his school life in this new school, Jaegu Song was showing some unusual attitude, different from his usual soft, shy, and timid self. The problem that can be analyzed about Jaegu Song is the change of his behavior.

This study will use a theory of personality disorder theory. Personality disorder is a disease when someone's personality becomes extreme and interferes with their daily life. Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) itself is a severe mental health condition characterized by emotional instability, impulsive and self-damaging behaviors, and stormy interpersonal relationships. According to Kulacaoglu and Kose (2018), BPD patients are unable to regulate their emotions and quickly return to their baseline emotional states under stressful conditions. Borderline personality disorder is highly affected by traumatic life experience. Childhood trauma in BPD patients can take many forms in prospective studies including sexual abuse, physical abuse and neglect, verbal abuse, and early parental separation or loss (Kulacaoglu & Kose, 2018). However, based on a study with 500 people, those with physical abuse or trauma in childhood tend to have a borderline personality disorder as adults. In a way, borderline personality

disorder is a mental health disorder that impacts the way a person thinks and feels about herself and others, causing problems in everyday life.

METHODS

This study will use one of the theories from personality disorder called Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). The writer will use the symptoms, causes, and effects from BPD theory and apply it to the analysis of Jaegu Song's character in the webtoon. This study will show Jaegu Song's dialogues in the webtoon and after that, the writers will analyze the reason why he said that. The writers will also use Jaegu Song's actions, expression, monologues, and flashbacks. In the end, using BPD theory, this study will define whether Jaegu Song suffered from BPD.

THEORY

According to Riegenbach (2016), to be diagnosed with borderline personality disorder one must experience five or more of the symptoms. The symptoms of borderline personality disorder would include frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment, pattern of intense relationship characterized by alternating between extremes of idealization and devaluation, identity disturbance, impulsive actions, suicidal behavior, heavy mood swings, chronic emptiness or feelings of emptiness, episodes of rage, and the last one is feeling paranoid and dissociate (may not remember the actions they have done). This article discusses five symptoms of borderline personality disorder. The five symptoms that will be used in this article are intense unstable relationship, dissociation, efforts of avoiding real interaction with people, identity disturbance, and emotional instability.

There are some causes that can make someone suffer from borderline personality disorder. It is divided into two which are internal and external causes. The internal causes would include genetics, brain chemicals, and brain development. It is possible for people to be diagnosed with a borderline personality disorder without having a traumatic environment. The way they can be diagnosed with this cause is to do an EEG or a recording of brain activity. Some might show abnormalities in the prefrontal cortex that cause the person with impairment in executive functioning (which is associated with impulsivity), some might show decreases in the hippocampal and amygdala volumes that makes the person hypersensitive (Riegenbach, 2016).

The external causes might include a stressful childhood, bullying, being neglected by parents, etc. Getting to know the exact cause of someone's borderline personality disorder is a tricky thing because BPD's risk factor comes in different ways. Most researchers believe that BPD's development can be seen by using the diathesis-stress model. Diathesis-stress model suggests that biological predispositions increase vulnerability to be adversely influenced by environmental events (Riegenbach, 2016). This study will only discuss the external causes because internal causes can only be known with an EEG test and it is not shown in the *Webtoon Girls of The Wild's*.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section will be divided into three parts which are the discussion of each symptoms, causes, and effects.

Symptoms of Jaegu Song's Borderline Personality Disorder

There are nine symptoms for borderline personality disorder. To be diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, one must experience five out of nine symptoms in any circumstances (Riegenbach, 2016). In the webtoon, Jaegu Song experienced five out of nine symptoms,

namely intense unstable relationship, dissociation, efforts of avoiding real interaction with people, identity disturbance, and emotional instability.

1. Intense Unstable Relationship

The patterns of intense unstable relationships that can be found in people with borderline personality disorder are characterized by alternating between extremes of idealization and devaluation. Thus, in relationships people with BPD usually show full adoration to full hatred. In the early episodes, Jaegu's action was not clear whether he saw Ingui as a bad person or the other way around. Jaegu kept on showing that he did not want to be with Ingui, but he often showed that he was fine and felt happy when Ingui was around.

In episode 3, Jaegu said to Ingui that she was a monster, while in episode 10, Jaegu said to Ingui that he would quit the school because he did not want to be with her. Jaegu hated Ingui because he thought that Ingui was a selfish, ungrateful person who was always wasting money with paltry, thought highly of herself, and did not have a heart. Although Jaegu knew that he could get a better job with better payment if he graduated from high school, Jaegu dared to leave this free school even though he was poor and he was the breadwinner of his family. It can be concluded that Jaegu does not want any interactions with Ingui. On the other hand, even though Jaegu Song clearly showed that he hated Ingui Yoon, he often showed several opposite feelings towards her which were loving and caring. In episode 154, Jaegu was worried about Ingui just because she had a little scratch on her face and continued to caress her cheek. In episode 214, Jaegu confessed that he liked Ingui.

Looking at the evidence from episode 3 and 10 then episode 158 and 214, Jaegu was having an intense unstable relationship with Ingui due to his mixed feelings towards Ingui. Jaegu showed an intense hatred towards Ingui throughout the series, but he kept on pushing and pulling Ingui's presence. Several times he cast her away with harsh words, but sometimes he wanted to be close to her. This made Ingui also confused whether he liked her or not. This indicates that Jaegu Song in fact has an intense unstable relationship with Ingui Yoon because of Jaegu's mixed feelings toward her.

2. Dissociation

Dissociation is when people feel disconnected with their surroundings. According to Riegenbach (2016), people with borderline personality disorder tend to experience dissociation when they are under a lot of pressure. Jaegu showed some dissociation moments where he did not realize he hurt other people while hurting himself several times.

In episode 31, it is seen that Jaegu got blinded with rage because he experienced pressure when his little siblings got into the hospital for food poisoning. This incident made him disconnected from his surroundings because of three things.

- Jaegu already knew that his feet bled already, and yet he did not think much of it
- Jaegu "forgot" that he entered Gura Schools without permission in the middle of the school activity.
- Jaegu did not think when he was already throwing tantrums in someone's school.

To support these reasons, after throwing tantrums, Jaegu was seen to be so afraid (to the point where he was shaken) and admitted to himself that he did not realize he was throwing tantrums and making a fuss in Gura Highschool.

3. Efforts of Avoiding Real Interaction with People

Efforts to avoid real interaction in people with borderline personality disorder are a part of the symptoms where the sufferers often have thoughts of people leaving them, or will not be there for them when they need help. According to Riegenbach (2016), people with borderline

personality disorder who experience this symptom have a painful rejection by people in their past and tend to put up a high and thick wall for people, especially people who are similar to the person who abandoned them in the past.

In episode 221, Jaegu gave a stern warning to Daldal and told her to forbid her to come to him again. The reason why this can be considered as Jaegu's effort to avoid interaction with her is because Daldal reminded him of her mother, due to her motherly quality, and because she got too close to his personal life.

In the early episodes, Jaegu was also avoiding Ingui due to the similarity between Ingui and his mother that he pictured as a monster. In the early episode, Jaegu had a flashback of his mother when she left Jaegu and his little siblings. It means that the memory of Jaegu's mother made Jaegu avoid interaction with Ingui too because Ingui reminded him of his mother.

4. Identity Disturbance

According to Riegenbach (2016), rather than having a low self-esteem, identity disturbance in the BPD individual is more of not knowing who they are or might feel that they do not deserve to be in this world. In the webtoon, it can be noticed easily that what Jaegu always did was only studying, working, and taking care of his little siblings. Jaegu never did any hobby-related activities in the webtoon, not even listening to music or watching movies/TV. In one of the episodes, Jaegu was crying because he could not defend himself and said that he felt like he only lived to take care of his little siblings, and without them, he did not have any reason to live. Jaegu's thought in this episode shows that his identity is not important because the way he said it is the same as "without them, I am nothing" which indicates the symptom of people with BPD who have identity disturbance.

In another episode, Jaegu also said that he deserved no friends at all without any hint of sadness or depression on the webtoon panel. Saying things like this coldly with no hint of sadness might be a hint that he was so tired and resigned with his life and with himself. Jaegu also said that while talking to someone and also while doing the laundry. Jaegu usually conversed with other people without doing anything particular, especially if the context of the conversation was important. Looking at how he talked about himself negatively while doing the laundry indicates that he might find the topic not particularly important, even though it was about himself.

5. Emotional Instability

According to Riegenbach (2016), people with BPD also experience emotion with extreme/intense levels. For example, if they are feeling anxious, it will be more extreme/intense than anyone else. In a way, people who are shown to have constant, immediate, and intense/extreme changes of emotions might indicate the sign of borderline personality disorder.

In episode 23, it can be seen that Jaegu was beaten by his old schoolmate, but he did not fight back immediately and instead he stayed on the floor for quite a while. Then he started getting up while holding a brick with an expression like a mad man, just like what one of his bullies said, ready to throw it while saying 'When will this be over? In a year? 10 year? Will this be over when I die? Or when you die?'. This indicates that Jaegu's emotion during this scene was intense enough to make him not act like himself. The feeling of anger, depression, stress, and hopelessness were so intense that he acted more excessively than usual. Jaegu might have had the intention of defending himself, but that occurred because he had intense emotions or moods.

All in all, Jaegu often showed his quick changes of intense emotions. This can be concluded because in one scene, Jaegu stayed quiet but the next thing that happened was he suddenly (and unknowingly) made a move that had a high chance of killing both himself and his old schoolmate. By looking at Jaegu's actions, it might be said that he simply defended himself.

However, by considering his personality and his dialogues, it can be concluded that Jaegu experienced emotional instability.

By looking at Jaegu Song's actions and dialogues, the result is Jaegu experiences five out of nine borderline personality disorder symptoms. The symptoms that Jaegu experienced were intense unstable relationship, dissociation, efforts of avoiding real interaction with people, identity disturbance, and emotional instability. According to Rigganbach (2016), someone can suffer from borderline personality disorder when he experiences five out of nine symptoms. So, in terms of borderline personality disorder symptoms, Jaegu Song can officially be said to have suffered from borderline personality disorder.

The Causes of Jaegu Song's Borderline Personality Disorder

Getting to know the exact cause of someone's borderline personality disorder is a tricky thing because BPD's risk factor comes in different ways. Most researchers believe that BPD development can be seen by using the diathesis-stress model which is looking at the combination of internal and external causes. In a way, borderline personality disorder can be developed through the interaction of both biological and environmental risk factors. This study will only analyze the environmental cause. It does not close the possibility that Jaegu might also have had brain abnormalities that led him to have borderline personality disorder. However, due to the non-existence scene where Jaegu Song got medical or EEG check-ups to know about the biological cause of his BPD, this article will only focus on the environmental or external causes. The environmental causes that make Jaegu develop BPD come from his family and his peers.

1. Abandonment from Parents

In this webtoon, Jaegu Song experienced a traumatic event in his early life when his mother abandoned him and his little siblings. Traumatic event in BPD is not only about physical abuse or sexual abuse, but it can also be because of early separation, and inadequate parenting, just like in Jaegu Song's case. Traumatic events can cause shock, stress, anger, and/or sadness to someone for several hours or days. However, if the feelings persist and keep on showing or triggered, the event can be called as the cause of someone's mental illness. With Jaegu Song's case, the event took a big toll on Jaegu because of his several flashbacks about his mother. It became the reason for his devaluation to some women.

In episode 3, Jaegu was having a flashback of the moment where he had an emotional breakdown when his mother left him. This event became one of the causes of his BPD because some of his symptoms like his intense unstable relationship, identity disturbance, and his avoidance of interaction with people happened because of this traumatic event. Jaegu's devaluation of Ingui during the early episodes happened because Jaegu had a flashback about his mother and linked it with his relationship with Ingui. In episode 3, Jaegu's flashback started with his idea that "women = mom" and ended with 'women are monsters', and finally at the ending of the episode, he called Ingui a monster. The event also forced Jaegu to be the parent for his little siblings and this took effect on his identity because he was only a teenager and already had to take a big responsibility like that. This event also made Jaegu overthink about having an interaction with someone who wanted to be close to him.

It can be concluded that this event can be called as one of the causes of Jaegu's borderline personality disorder because it can be seen that this event made a huge impact in Jaegu's life. Started with his devaluation on certain women, then it affected his idea about himself, and also it affected the way he interacted with certain people. Losing someone important such as a mother usually can hugely affect someone's life. Jaegu's experience of getting abandoned by his own mother when he needed her the most surely affected his mental state.

2. Constant Bullying from Peers

Other than experiencing abandonment from Jaegu's parents, the cause of Jaegu's borderline personality disorder came from constant bullying from his peers. In the webtoon, Jaegu experienced physical and emotional bullying for years since middle school and due to the constant bullying. Just like the previous cause, Jaegu's events of getting bullied can be the cause of his mental illness when the effect (feelings) of the events keep on bothering him. Due to the effects of Jaegu's traumatic events that keep on showing in the webtoon, the constant bullying from his peers became one of the roots of Jaegu's borderline personality disorder.

Jaegu has been physically abused and bullied since junior highschool until highschool. In episode 34, it appears that everytime Jaegu got beaten, he never closed his eyes out of fear. During the early episodes, Jaegu also never fought back whenever he was bullied. These indicate that these abusive events happened way too much that he gave up on trying to fight back. Another effect of the constant bullying (physically and mentally) was his idea about himself. Because he was the target of bullying in his old school, Jaegu never had any friends. This led him to feel that he deserved to have no friends. The constant beating from his schoolmates was the reason why he experienced identity disturbance and felt chronic loneliness.

The Effects of Jaegu Song's Borderline Personality Disorder Behavior

Due to Jaegu's condition of having traumatic events that lead to several BPD's symptoms, several negative effects can be seen on him. People with borderline personality disorder have different effects because each person has different causes, traumatic events, combinations of mental illness, and symptoms. However, people with BPD still have some patterns of similarity of causes, symptoms, and effects. In Jaegu's case of borderline personality disorder, it gave some effects on him with episodes of inappropriate and intense anger or rage, indecisive behavior, demoralized sense of self, depression, and the inability to maintain a healthy relationship.

1. Inappropriate and Intense Anger or Rage

As a consequence of Jaegu's dissociation and emotional instability, Jaegu showed some intense anger or rage in several episodes in the webtoon. During Jaegu's dissociation moments, he often showed some signs of intense anger. In episode 31, it is shown that Jaegu was having a dissociation moment and vented it on one of his old schoolmates by trying to throw a chair to his old schoolmate and also threw him on the floor and tried to beat him with his own hand. People with BPD with symptoms of dissociation get triggered because of a lot of stress that happened at one time. In Jaegu's case, his dissociation came from an intense anger that built because he thought his little siblings got sick because of his old schoolmate. His intense anger affected other people and in this case, it affected his old schoolmate.

Not only during dissociation moments, Jaegu also showed some signs of intense anger during his emotional instability moments. The example of his raging moments can be seen in some episodes in the webtoon like in episode 19 and 23. In episode 19, Jaegu's emotional instability was triggered because his old schoolmate pushed his little brother. From the scene, it can be concluded that Jaegu was a little too sensitive when it came to his little siblings. When his little brother cried because he got pushed, Jaegu immediately grabbed a gas cylinder that still had the hose connected without any second thought. While in episode 23, Jaegu experienced another intense feeling of anger and other feelings when he was thinking about his miserable life. Due to this emotional instability in episode 13, Jaegu showed another raging episode by trying to throw a brick to his old schoolmate.

Jaegu's inappropriate and intense anger or rage is the effect of his borderline personality syndrome, specifically his symptoms of dissociation and emotional instability. As stated before, during dissociative episodes, people can forget who they are, in what condition they are in, and

do not think about the later consequences. Jaegu's dissociative episodes are often marked with his rage which he vented on other people. Also, Jaegu could not control his emotion, and it led to extreme and/or intense emotion/feeling.

2. Indecisive Behavior Characterized in the Inability to Maintain Healthy Relationship

During the whole series of the webtoon, Jaegu's symptoms of BPD affected how he decided something, and this affected his relationship with people. As stated before, one of Jaegu's symptoms of BPD is intense unstable relationships and effort of avoiding interaction with people. Jaegu's indecisive behavior that makes him unable to maintain a healthy relationship was the effect of these two symptoms. Jaegu could not maintain a healthy relationship with Ingui and Daldal because he was indecisive of whether or not he wanted to be around them.

In episode 3 and 10, Jaegu rejected Ingui's presence by degrading her and even expressed it to Ingui that he wanted to quit the school to avoid her. After he rejected her presence, Jaegu then showed that he liked her company. In another episode, Jaegu seemed like he enjoyed Ingui's presence because he said "it is not like you" to Ingui. The way he said that indicated that Jaegu noticed something out of the ordinary about Ingui, meaning he often thought and remembered the little things about Ingui. Jaegu might have changed his idea about Ingui once he got to know her. However, in episode 221, Jaegu rejected Ingui's presence once again. Up to this point, Jaegu started to show indecisive behavior. To add it up, Jaegu's indecisive behavior happened again in episode 261 when he decided to go after Ingui in another country. This indecisive behavior of Jaegu might have made the relationship he had with Ingui unhealthy.

Another example of Jaegu's indecisive behavior can be seen with his relationship with Daldal. During the early episode, Daldal always tried to be close with Jaegu. However, in one of the episodes, Jaegu also rejected Daldal's presence. The same with Ingui, Jaegu was seen to be close with Daldal each day, even though he already told Daldal to go away from him. In episode 220, Jaegu showed yet another indecisive behavior by rejecting Daldal's presence again. However, not long after he said that, Jaegu started trying to have a conversation with Daldal again despite all the harsh things he said to her.

The indecisive behavior of Jaegu was characterized by his inability to keep a healthy relationship because the pattern of Jaegu's indecisive behavior was about relationships. Jaegu's indecisive behavior can be seen through the pattern on how he treated Ingui and Daldal through all of the episodes. Jaegu could not decide on wanting to be with Ingui or not. The same with Ingui, Jaegu also could not decide on wanting to be a friend with Daldal or not. Because Jaegu kept on rejecting and chasing them repeatedly, it can be inferred that Jaegu could not keep a healthy relationship.

3. Demoralized Sense of Self

Demoralized sense of self is a condition where people feel low self-esteem, hopelessness, helplessness, sadness, lack of efficiency, and anxiety. In several episodes, it can be concluded that Jaegu showed a demoralized sense of self. In one of the episodes, Jaegu said that he did not have any choice to grow up. Saying that, it can be said that he has given up his freedom in order to take his father's place in taking care of his little siblings. This also can be referred to as the loss of hope in life. It is because by saying that, Jaegu felt that it was useless to hope for something that could help his family's condition, and so he immediately decided to force himself to be a grown up man. Jaegu also showed the feeling of helplessness because he specifically said that he felt helpless when he was getting beaten. In another episode, Jaegu said that he had always been a weak person who had no hopes in life, and when he said that life was hard for him. Looking through the choice of words that he chose, Jaegu really showed the feeling of lack of efficiency because he thought that he has always been a weak person. By

saying 'always been' and then continued with 'a weak person', it shows that he felt that he did not have the ability to be in use because he was not strong enough. This statement also shows that Jaegu feels helpless because he could not do anything with his weak self.

2.3.4 Depression

Depression is marked when someone feels worthless, pessimistic, and sad that lasts for days. One of Jaegu's depressive moments can be found within his dialogue in episode 24. Jaegu mentioned before that without his little sibling, he did not have any reason to live. That statement indicates a depressive episode because it leads to the feeling of worthlessness and pessimism. By saying things like that, it means that he only found his significance in his little siblings, nothing more. It can also be said that if his little sibling was gone, he felt that he was not important anymore and Jaegu did not even think about other options in order to help himself and his family's condition. The depression of Jaegu as an effect in this scene happened because of his family condition where everyone depended on him.

In the early episodes, Jaegu kept feeling worthless and pessimistic because of his family condition and his life that was hopeless because he could only focus on his part time and school in order to make a living for his little siblings. While in later episodes, Jaegu still felt worthless but with a different reason. In later episodes, his depression can be seen from his decision when he avoided having a relationship with Ingui and Daldal. Jaegu's pessimism and worthlessness kept going on for several times in the episode. This can be seen in almost every episode because everytime Jaegu's monologue appeared in the webtoon, it was all about his miserable life. This can be proven in episode 1, 3, 4, 5, 12, and other episodes throughout the series. Due to many scenes where Jaegu expressed the feeling of worthlessness and pessimism, this can be considered that one of the effects of Jaegu's BPD is depression.

CONCLUSION

By using Riggensbach (2016) theory of Borderline Personality Disorder, this article shows that in the webtoon *Girls of the Wild's*, Jaegu Song was actually shown to suffer from borderline personality disorder. Borderline personality disorder itself is a severe mental health condition. The sickness will impact the way people think about themselves and others and can hugely impact their actions. According to Riggensbach (2016), to be categorized as having a borderline personality disorder, someone must experience five out of nine borderline personality disorder symptoms. The causes of borderline personality disorder can be viewed from the combinations of internal and external causes. Thus, borderline personality disorder can be caused by brain abnormalities or genetics and also by environmental causes. However, the focus in this article is on someone who has borderline personality disorder because he got contaminated with a bad social circle or environment throughout his life that made him develop this mental health condition.

In short, Jaegu Song can officially be called a person with borderline personality disorder due to his symptoms, causes and effects that match with borderline personality disorder theory. This article found out that Jaegu Song experienced five out nine symptoms. This study also showed the proof of Jaegu Song's past that made him develop borderline personality disorder. Finally, Jaegu also showed the effects of his borderline personality disorder, namely inappropriate and intense anger or rage, indecisive behavior, demoralized sense of self, and depression.

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