

Jay Asher's "Thirteen Reasons Why" Sexual Abuse Phenomenon

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the types of sexual abuse that the protagonist of the book "Thirteen Reasons Why" encounters, as well as how the psychological effects of the abuse affect the protagonist. In examining the different types of sexual abuse and their effects in the book, the researcher combined a psychoanalytical approach with descriptive and analysis methods to determine how the abuse might alter the psychological state of the characters. For the purpose of actively gathering secondary data to improve the comprehension of this research, library research, internet-based research, and book reading strategies were used. According to the study's findings, there are three different types of sexual abuse that take place in the book "Thirteen Reasons Why": verbal abuse (such as slander and negative labeling) and non-verbal abuse (such as peeping toms) as well as physical abuse (such as touching and coerced sex penetration). The character also experiences extreme shifts, unjustified feelings, overwhelming emotions, and suicidal thoughts as psychological effects.

Keywords: Sexual Abuse, Psychoanalysis, Depression.

INTRODUCTION

In the sense of fiction, 'imaginative' writing refers to as literature. It indicates that literature is an imaginative mindset that was inspired by someone's imagination or by actual occurrences that may actually occur in real life, both having their own tricky definition. Literature also differs from other literary genres in

that it has a unique soul and strength (Sujarwo et al., 2022; Oktaviana, 2023). Novels are one type of literary work. A novel is defined as a story containing multiple events, a plot with characters, a place, a topic, a point of view, and the character's worldview (Logara, 2019; Sukmawati, 2022). The researcher might examine numerous situations, including the intrinsic and extrinsic substance, the theory, and various other elements, in a novel. The author of this study chose to examine the sexual abuse depicted in Jay Asher's book "Thirteen Reasons Why".

Sexual abuse is one of the violations against sexual freedom, according to Cohen and Esturaro (2011: 211), the culprit can be anyone, including men, women, and even the victim. However, what we want to emphasize here is the victim's role to the offense. Sexual abuse, like any other crime, is studied in criminology, the science that analyzes crime, criminality, and their causes: the victim, social control of the illegal act, the offender's personality, and how to reintegrate him/her into society.

Jay Asher published a young adult book *"Thirteen Reasons Why"* in 2007. It tells the tale of a teenage girl named Hannah Baker who kills herself and leaves a set of cassette tapes listing twelve people from her high school who she holds accountable for her suicide as well as thirteen reasons. Numerous contemporary teenage problems are addressed in the book, including bullying, depression, suicide, self-harm, and sexual assault. Hannah Baker was subjected to sexual abuse by her peers before being raped by one of their school's well-known students. Her mental health has gotten worse as a result of her negative reputation at school. She experiences unwanted touching, stalking, and even rape. One of the factors contributing to what transpired was that one of her acquaintances had given her a "bad label."

The researcher discovers that there are numerous instances of sexual abuse occurring in our culture today. However, there are still a lot of sexual abuse victims who are afraid to come forward and often place the blame on themselves. As a result, there are increasing numbers of occurrences of sexual abuse that are unreported and go unreacted to. The researcher selected this study in order to raise reader awareness of the prevalence of sexual abuse among teenagers and the possibility that they may already be victims of this abuse without even being aware of it. The researcher observed that sexual abuse frequently occurs in her personal settings, such as whistling to someone as they pass by or making inappropriate facial expressions while staring at their body. The researcher wants to explain to the readers how acts of abuse can have such a deadly effect on a person's mental and psychic health that they cause them to consider suicide.

METHOD

The researcher used a descriptive analytic strategy for this investigation. A descriptive analytic method describes, examines, and explains the data while it is being studied. Descriptive analysis, according to Loeb et al. (2017), describes the world or a phenomena by providing answers to the who, what, where, when, and to what extent questions. In the scientific method in general and in educational

research in particular, description plays a crucial role in identifying patterns and variation in populations, developing new measures of important phenomena, or describing samples in studies aiming at discovering causal effects.

The purpose of descriptive research, based on Gall, Gall, and Borg in Nassaji (2015), is to explain a phenomena and its traits. This study is more interested in what occurred than in how or why it occurred. As a result, data collection methods like observation and surveys are frequently used.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Forms of Sexual Abuse

Verbal Abuse

A form of sexual abuse known as verbal abuse includes using derogatory or unpleasant language. The verbal abuse victim may experience some emotional and psychological suffering as a result of the language employed.

The Salacious Rumors

Regardless of whether the news is true or false, rumors are a type of news that are spread verbally amongst people. Sexual abuse occurs when someone makes sexual rumors about someone, especially when the victim feels uncomfortable and is being hurt.

"Hannah took off her shirt and let Justin put his hands up her bra. That's it. That's what I heard happened in the park that night." (Asher, 2007:25)

The passage above, which is written from Clay's perspective, describes how he learned about the unsuitable rumor about Justin Foley and Hannah Baker. The rumor was started by Justin Foley and his buddies, and it immediately spread across the entire school like wildfire.

"Oh. So sorry. You wanted something sexier, didn't you? You wanted to hear how my itchy little fingers started playing with his zipper. You wanted to hear...

Well, what did you want to hear? Because I've heard so many stories that I don't know which one is the most popular. But I do know which is the least popular.

The truth." (Asher, 2007:29)

According to the passage above, Hannah Baker described how she had heard numerous tales about her and Justin despite the fact that all they had been doing was kissing. People, however, are constantly curious to learn more. And so rumors start to spread. Whether or whether it is true, the more you exaggerate it, the more people will speak about it.

Bad Labeling

Sexual abuse is the act of making an unwanted sexual remark to someone. The sexual comment itself is a type of offensive remark about a person's sex.

"A cupped hand smacked my ass. And then, he said it. "Best Ass in the Freshman Class, Wally. Standing right here in your store!"" (Asher, 2007:47-48)

In the quotation above, two types of sexual abuse were mentioned. After purposefully grabbing Hannah's butt, Bryce continued to make sexual remarks about it by informing the cashier about the crude and inappropriate joke that his friend, Alex Standall, had made.

The researcher thinks it is completely impolite and disrespectful when someone uses another person's body as a reference for something. No one has the right to affix labels on another person's body, regardless of whether what they say or write is good or terrible.

Non-Verbal Abuse

The Peeping Tom

In the book *Thirteen Reasons Why*, Tyler Down, a student at Hannah Baker's school, committed the act of stalking. According to the novel, taking images of Hannah without her permission and doing it when Tyler Down knows she is about to change clothing constitutes stalking and sexual abuse. It hinted that Tyler intended to snap pictures of Hannah without clothes on.

"Either way, after I went inside—alone!—I washed my face and brushed my teeth. And the moment I stepped into my room ... Click." (Asher, 2007:79)

The aforementioned remark describes Hannah's realization that she is being observed as she hears the sound of a camera clicking. The youngster was very certain that someone was taking a photo of her. According to the narrative, Hannah claims that she always leaves her blinds open, even at night. Even taking images of someone without their permission while loitering or watching them is illegal, especially if it involves intimate or sexual material. Typically, stalkers engage in such behavior for their personal sexual satisfaction.

Additionally, Hannah and Courtney, a classmate of Hannah's, are spending the evening at Hannah's house doing homework and preparing to capture the Peeping Tom. A person who enjoys discreetly spying on others as they undress or engage in sexual activity is known as a peeping tom. In contrast to Hannah, who finds having a stalker creepy, Courtney finds having someone keep an eye on you to be sexy. The researcher thinks it quite odd that somebody would regard engaging in abuse to be an appealing pastime.

"She reached into the drawer, pushed some things around, then covered her mouth again. "Hannah?" she said. "How many of these do you have? You are definitely a naughty girl." Click. Click." (Asher, 2007:87)

In the quote above, Courtney and Hannah play along with the Peeping Tom by pretending that Hannah has something in the drawer. It is clear from this situation that Courtney is the only one who is genuinely enthusiastic about their purpose. By caressing each other's backs, she even coaxes Hannah into putting on a small performance to attract more of the Peeping Tom's attention. After reading the account several times, the researcher may have come to the conclusion that Courtney Crimsen is a fraud. She propagated reports that Hannah keeps sex gear in her bedroom drawers in the days that followed assisting Hannah find the Peeping Tom. Because Courtney circulated the lewd stories about Hannah in sexual terms, this can also be regarded as a sort of sexual abuse. Hannah eventually comes to believe that no one is even remotely trustworthy because of her betrayal.

"I jumped at the window and yanked the cord. The blinds flew up. I looked for your face but you were moving so fast."

The other girl, she wasn't looking at your face, Tyler.

"Oh my God!" she screamed. "He's cramming his dick in his pants."" (Asher, 2007:88)

According to the passage above, Tyler Down, the Peeping Tom, was engaged in some activity when Hannah and Courtney discovered him. Tyler was definitely performing some sort of penetration while watching Hannah and Courtney perform. This behavior qualifies as sexual abuse. Later, Hannah tries to persuade Tyler to be the Peeping Tom by asking him where he was the night before at school. Tyler's reluctant and awkward response leads Hannah to believe Tyler is the Peeping Tom. The Peeping Tom, Tyler Down, has since ceased hanging around Hannah's house, but he was always there. She has closed her blinds every night since that day with a twist. When someone is aware that they are being watched by someone else, especially when the person is someone they know, the researcher finds it to be highly upsetting. Tyler may have a crush on Hannah, but the researcher's methods for approaching Hannah were inappropriate and impolite.

Physical Abuse

Back Touch

Sexual abuse includes touching someone's private parts without their consent. Bryce Walker, who had previously harassed Hannah at the Blue Spot Liquor, committed this act of abuse. It is evident in the quotation that follows.

"A cupped hand smacked my ass. And then, he said it. "Best Ass in the Freshman Class, Wally. Standing right here in your store!"" (Asher, 2007:47-48)

The aforementioned quote occurred when Bryce Walker smacked Hannah Baker's behind during his abuse of her. According to the narrative, Bryce made that choice in response to a list created by one of his pals, Alex Standall. The finest and worst body shapes for girls are included on the list. Bryce Walker feels justified in hitting Hannah Baker in the behind because she was listed as one of the Best Ass. Therefore, no one has the right to describe or write about another person's physical shape or form, then do an act by touching it to demonstrate that what they wrote is accurate. Even if the researcher was persuaded that Bryce is essentially a vulgar and haughty man, the list was just a pretext for him to act impolitely toward Hannah.

Haunch Touch

Marcus Cooley, a classmate of Hannah's, also engages in physical contact with her on their date night. Marcus' Oh My Valentine list, which contains the names of the people the students will ask out on a date on Valentine's Day, unintentionally includes Hannah's name. Hannah does, however, have some reservations about Marcus' invitation to a date.

"Your shoulder rotated and I lifted my head, but now your arm was behind my back and pulling me close. And your other hand was touching my leg. My upper thigh." (Asher, 2007:142)

According to this remark, Marcus Cooley inappropriately harassed Hannah by placing his hand on her upper thigh. Because of that one list, which Marcus'

friend Alex Standall created, Marcus harassed Hannah. Along with Bryce Walker, Marcus is a vulgar man who disrespected Hannah as a result of the "WHO'S HOT/WHO'S NOT" list. Because of the description Alex gave Hannah, Marcus and his pals undoubtedly believe that she is a simple girl. Hannah pulled Marcus away after feeling uneasy about the intimate touch he gave her.

Forced Sexual Penetration

Bryce Walker, who also touched Hannah in an inappropriate manner at the Blue Spot Liquor Store, committed the rape in the book *Thirteen Reasons Why*. *"Your whole hand was back. And when I didn't stop you, you slid your hand across my belly. Your thumb touched the bottom of my bra and your pinky touched the top of my underwear."* (Asher, 2007:263)

Bryce Walker purposefully touched Hannah in the hot tub, as stated in the aforementioned quotation. The party was held in Courtney Crimsen's house, where the action is currently taking place. Hannah had only intended to pass by the location, but then Bryce Walker comes and invites Hannah to attend the after-party.

"And that's all you needed, Bryce. You started kissing my shoulder, my neck, sliding your fingers in and out. And then you kept going. You didn't stop there." (Asher, 2007:265)

According to the aforementioned quotes, Bryce Walker is still touching Hannah and raping her. Hannah fights with her tears, refusing to shove his hand away. Bryce is aware of it but doesn't care. It is dreadful to touch someone without their consent, but it is even worse to go above and beyond the call of duty by forcibly penetrating and trying to forcefully give a sexual penetration.

Impacts of Sexual Abuse

The Drastic Changes

A sexual abuse victim may experience a mental breakdown and gradually alter their conduct. This could also cause the victim to act differently and conceal their feelings. They will behave differently than they did prior to being sexually harassed, possibly shifting from positive to negative energy. This might qualify as a mental illness.

"After your visits, I twisted my blinds shut every night. I locked out the stars and I never saw lightning again. Each night, I simply turned out the lights and went to bed." (Asher, 2007:89)

According to the passage above, it is clear why Hannah changed her behavior so quickly after learning that Tyler Down, a classmate, was stalking her. Hannah always kept her blinds open before that unpleasant incident since she enjoys dozing off while admiring the stars.

"Come to think of it, I cut my hair the very day Marcus Cooley and I met at Rosie's Wow! That's weird. All those warning signs they tell us to watch out for, they're true. I went straight from Rosie's to get my hair cut. I needed a change, just like they said, so I changed my appearance. The only thing I still had control over." (Asher, 2007:163)

Hannah wanted to alter her image by getting a new haircut, as the statement above explains. The majority of people, the study finds, believe that changing one's hairdo can provide them a feeling of power and emotional release, particularly when they are going through a painful event like abuse or a breakup. Getting a haircut can be beneficial for one's mental health because one's emotions seem to be strongly connected to one's hair.

"A few days before she took the pills, Hannah was herself again. She said hello to everyone in the halls. She looked us in the eyes. It seemed so drastic because it had been months since she had acted like that. Like the real Hannah." (Asher, 2007:171)

The passage above is from Clay's perspective, who noted that Hannah's conduct had changed significantly before she took her own life. Clay learns from listening to the tapes that there were indications of Hannah's alterations, such as the girl avoiding eye contact with him in the hallways. Hannah was, however, back to being herself just a few days before she took her own life. It is a surprising transformation because, prior to that day, she exhibited some depressive symptoms such as being withdrawn and lonely. But being drastically more like yourself again might also be a symptom of depression, which is characterized by overwhelming emotions. The impact of sexual abuse on her conduct and looks is thus demonstrated.

Undeserve Feelings

A victim of sexual abuse may experience psychological and social effects. They might experience insecurity and occasionally have a tendency to believe they don't belong in society.

"I wanted to tell you everything. And that hurt because some things were too scary. Some things even I didn't understand. How could I tell someone—someone I was really talking to for the first time—everything I was thinking? I couldn't. It was too soon." (Asher, 2007:210)

The aforementioned remark clarifies Hannah's worry about how she wanted to be upfront about her situation but was too afraid that others would avoid her if she did. Hannah was scared that because of all that had occurred to her negatively, people might not think highly of her.

Because of a past tragedy that still makes them feel uncertain about themselves, the feeling of unworthiness causes a person believe they no longer have a chance to be a part of a community. They began to believe that they don't deserve anything or anyone who can bring them happiness as soon as they underwent some unpleasant experiences in their lives.

Uncontrollable Emotions

Depression is a significant medical condition that can result in uncontrollable emotions like melancholy, misery, and a loss of interest in activities. Depression often causes people to withdraw and become more reserved.

"He asked if I was all right, and I forced myself to nod. But my eyes kept staring at the glass—through the glass— at the spoon. And I kept thinking, over and over, Is this what it feels like to go insane?"

"I'm sorry," he said. "For whatever happened just now."

I felt my head continue to nod as if it was attached to heavy springs, but I couldn't bring myself to tell him that I appreciated his words." (Asher, 2007:160)

Constantly feeling depressed, nervous, or empty is one of its symptoms. Marcus Cooley left Hannah at Rosie's after engaging in an inappropriate act with the girl, as stated in the aforementioned remark. Hannah was the target of Marcus's groping attempt on her upper thigh. Hannah tries to fend Marcus off and pushes him to the ground, but Marcus continued to touch her despite her warnings. Zach Dempsey, a friend of Marcus's, arrived at Hannah's table as soon as Marcus left and inquired about her well-being.

"I shut my eyes, tight. I wasn't watching the TV anymore. I wasn't in that room anymore. I could only think back to that closet, hiding inside it with a pile of jackets surrounding me. And once again, I started rocking back and forth, back and forth. And once again, no one was around to hear me cry." (Asher, 2007:258)

Hannah was unable to stop thinking about the night she saw her own friend being violated and occasionally experienced flashbacks like the one in the aforementioned passage. She was house-sitting for a family friend of her father, whose home just so happens to be next door to Courtney Crimsen's. As a result, Hannah felt a little triggered when she heard the bass thudding near the house where they held the party because it brought back memories of what had occurred that evening at her previous party.

Suicidal Thought

Depression and anxiety are two mental health problems that are frequently linked to suicidal behavior. When someone purposefully takes their own life, it poses a major public health risk. The majority of people experience suicide thoughts during difficult times, under stress, or when they are dealing with serious medical or mental health issues.

"Before that party, I'd thought about giving up so many times. I don't know, maybe some people are just preconditioned to think about it more than others. Because everytime something bad happened, I thought about it. It? Okay, I'll say it. I thought about suicide." (Asher, 2007:253-254)

The aforementioned remark describes how often Hannah wanted to give up when terrible things happened to her and how she repeatedly considered suicide, in addition to when she encounters such types of abuse. Suicidal ideation refers to a circumstance in which a person believes that there is no hope for the future and may consider taking their own life as a way out.

"At the end of class, Mrs. Bradley passed out a flyer called The Warning Signs of a Suicidal Individual. Guess what was right up there in the top five?

"A sudden change in appearance."

I tugged on the ends of my newly cropped hair.

Huh. Who knew I was so predictable?" (Asher, 2007:173)

The aforementioned remark makes it very evident that Hannah Baker is in fact dealing with a severe mental disease when she recognizes that she possesses one of the signs of suicidal behavior. Hannah had previously sent a note to Mrs. Bradley, the peer communication teacher, outlining the topic she would want to propose for the upcoming conversations. She expressed in her writing her desire

for the class to discuss suicide. Nonetheless, that subject was never covered in class; instead, when Mrs. Bradley brought it up, some students made rude comments. Even though there was no additional discussion of suicide that day, Mrs. Bradley distributed a flier regarding the warning signs of suicidal behavior at the end of class. Hannah's ultimate realization that she was a suicidal person who has shown signs of doing so.

The researcher discovers that suicide cases can be found in any social setting when people do not get along well with one another. Since both society and individuals are parts of one another, there is a strong relationship between persons and both. However, a lack of integration will give people the impression that they are not a part of society, which implies that society is not a part of them either.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The researcher discovers after doing the study that sexual abuse can occur anytime and anywhere. Women constitute the majority of sexual abuse victims. Mostly because men believe that women are weak, rape culture and unequal gender relations make women the primary victims of rape.

As evidenced by some instances of sexual abuse, the male characters in the book "Thirteen Reasons Why" believe they are better than the main female character, Hannah Baker, who is a new student who just so happens to be dating Justin Foley, one of the popular students at school. Because the victim in the novel has already earned the reputation of being a nasty girl, that is the fundamental reason why sexual abuse occurs. The offenders, who labeled her and then tormented her as though it were common practice among high school students, are unaware that they are the ones who did it.

Based on the aforementioned conclusion, the researcher would like to advise the readers, especially those who have experienced sexual abuse, to exercise caution and greater caution when selecting friends; even though they did not deserve the abuse that they experienced, it never hurts to prevent it.

If you feel that your loved ones are experiencing stress or despair, ask them if they'd like to talk, and keep reminding them that they matter. The researcher mentions all the effects that could happen to a victim of sexual abuse. In addition, the researcher anticipated serving as a reference for future studies of sexual abuse in society.

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