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Holden Caulfield and Borderline Personality Disorder

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the psychological state of Holden Caulfield, the narrator of J. D. Salinger's (1919–2010) coming-of-age novel, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951). The character faces an inability to effectively communicate with his social surroundings. His traumatic childhood renders him alienated and disaffected. This paper examines the psychological problems of Holden Caulfield, which are manifested through many symptoms that he displays throughout the novel. According to the medical references utilized in this research, these symptoms are categorized into interpersonal, affective, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms. The analysis compares the symptoms, as identified by research in medical psychology, against Holden's feelings, behaviors, and thoughts. Based on this examination, the paper finds that Holden appears to suffer from borderline personality disorder—a condition identified by an extended period of emotional irregularity. This analysis also considers the environmental factors surrounding Holden that contribute to the development of this disorder. This study contributes to the field of psychological criticism of literature and opens the door for further studies in this interdisciplinary territory.

المخلص

يستعرض هذا البحث الحالة النفسية لشخصية هولدن كولفيلد، البطل الرئيسي لرواية الحارس في حقل الشوفان (1951) للكاتب الأمريكي جي دي سالنجر (1919-2010). يعاني هولدن من عدم القدرة على التواصل بفعالية مع محيطه الخارجي، وذلك نتيجة لطفولته المؤلمة التي جعلت منه شخصاً منعزلاً وفرداً ساخطاً على المجتمع. تتجلى المشكلة النفسية لدى هولدن من خلال الأعراض التي يتم تناولها في الرواية. ووفقاً للمراجع الطبية المستخدمة في هذا البحث، تصنف هذه الأعراض إلى أعراض شخصية، وعاطفية، وإدراكية، وسلوكية. يقارن البحث الأعراض المحددة من قبل الطب النفسي بمشاعر وسلوكيات وأفكار هولدن في الرواية. وبناءً على هذه المقارنة، تصل الدراسة إلى أن هولدن كولفيلد قد يعاني من اضطراب الشخصية الحدية، وهي حالة من الاضطراب العاطفي المرافق للمريض لفترة من الزمن. كما تشير الدراسة إلى العوامل البيئية التي أدت إلى نشوء هذا الاضطراب عند شخصية هولدن. يساهم هذا البحث في الإضافة إلى مجال النقد النفسي للأدب، وفتح الباب لمزيد من الدراسات التي تدرس النص الأدبي من منظور الطب النفسي.

1. Introduction

Fiction, in its depiction of human characters, portrays diverse facets of the human psyche. People with psychological problems are occasionally included in such representations. Some of these portrayals are straightforward, like the mad wife in the attic in Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), the depressed, bipolar Esther Greenwood in Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963), Alex, the sociopath in Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), and the occupants of an entire psychiatric hospital in Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962). Hence, it is not surprising that a mental illness like schizophrenia is known among psychiatrists as the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde phenomenon, named after Stevenson's 1886 novel. *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) by the American novelist J. D. Salinger (1919–2010) is not fundamentally a psychological novel. Nevertheless, it can be approached as one, especially since its protagonist, Holden Caulfield, who also serves as its first-person narrator, is a psychiatric patient. At the beginning of the novel, the reader learns that Caulfield is seeking help in a psychiatric institution, but at no moment does the text mention what his true problem is.

With advancing research in psychiatry and the integration of the sciences and humanities, the character of Holden Caulfield can be reassessed considering modern medical psychology. This study investigates the symptoms of Holden's psychological crisis with reference to enhanced psychiatry research. Throughout the novel, Holden enacts repetitive patterns that dovetail with the symptoms of borderline personality disorder—also known as BPD. However, nowhere in the narration does Holden reveal what his real problem is; he is rather selective about the information he communicates to the reader. Not only he is skilled at hiding the truth, but he is also quite capable of altering it when necessary. He admits to being "the most terrific liar," which calls the credibility of his narration into question (16). The story begins with Holden stating that he is seeking the help

of a psychiatrist after having quit school several times. His doctor, Dr. Thurmer, instructs him on how to deal with life's pressures (8). Many people around Holden suspect that something is wrong with his mind. His friend Luce, for example, suggests that Holden should consult a psychologist to help him "recognize the patterns of [his] mind" (148). Holden apparently suffers from some kind of mental problem; thus, this study investigates this problem, defines it, and explores the reasons behind it.

In contemporary psychiatry, BPD is one of the most written about illnesses. According to the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)* by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) (2013), BPD is "a pervasive pattern of instability of interpersonal relationships, self-image, marked impulsivity, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts" (663). This disorder has nine major symptoms: fear of abandonment, unstable interpersonal relationships, identity disturbance, impulsivity, recurrent suicidal behavior, emotional instability, feelings of emptiness, constant anger, and severe dissociative symptoms (APA, 2013: 663). Throughout the history of psychiatry, scholars have used different names for this disorder before settling on BPD. First, when used in psychiatry, the word "borderline" refers to a level of mental illness that falls between two distinct boundaries, like an area between "psychosis and neurosis" (Hodges, 2003: 409). Second, the word "personality" in psychology describes the way an individual relates to other people and to the environment (Clarkin *et al.*, 1999: 4). Third, according to APA (2013), the definition of "disorder" is a disruption of four key elements of the personality: "cognition, affectivity, interpersonal functioning, and impulse control" (663).

This paper relies on an important study by Mary C. Zonarini (2006), a professor of psychology at Harvard Medical School and a specialist in the phenomenology of BPD. Her study is fundamental and is often cited in other studies. She describes the types and degrees of BPD that

help clinical specialists diagnose this disorder. Her study adds more symptoms to the nine identified by APA (2013) in *DSM-5*, which are categorized into four major categories: interpersonal, affective, cognitive, and behavioral. Stone (2006) gives a detailed definition of the disorder and discusses the history, etymology, and major concepts related to it. Silk et al. (2006) identify the significant role of family, school, peers, and childhood trauma in the development of this disorder. This paper uses the fifth and latest edition of *DSM-5* by APA (2013) as a reliable reference for the definition and symptoms of BPD. *DSM-5* is a major resource that specialists use to diagnose psychological and mental illnesses. It provides a precise definition of this disorder and lists nine major diagnostic symptoms of it. It also describes culture and gender-related issues relating to BPD.

Fortunately, some insightful work has already explored the psychological problems found in *The Catcher in the Rye*, especially those of Holden Caulfield. Bryan (2000) provides a meaningful exploration of Holden's personality and psychological issues. Due to Holden's unreliability as a narrator, Bryan (2000) assumes that the reader experiences some uncertainty concerning the story. His article investigates the psychological structure of the novel through the "aggression and withdrawal" of its protagonist (31). On the other hand, Throwbridge (2000) views Holden as a seeker of the truth in a deceitful world. According to Throwbridge (2000), Holden's main psychological crisis is that he constantly "falls short for his own ideal" (22). He states that the novel dramatically revolves around two conflicts: the hero's inner conflict with himself and his external conflict with the environment (22). He presents Holden as an idealist who is struggling between these conflicts in the modern, deceitful world. Heiserman and Miller (2006) address the subjects of childhood and loss of innocence in the novel. Holden is engaged in an endless endeavor to protect the innocence of children and save them from the corruption of social institutions. Finally, Scott (2007) lightly touches upon Holden as a troubled teen with an unbalanced psychological state by considering him as being symbolically castrated following his expulsion from school.

Although many studies have examined Holden Caulfield's psychological problems, the assumption that Holden might be suffering from BPD has not been sufficiently elaborated on in reliable studies. Therefore, this study further investigates this claim by taking into consideration the available medical literature relating to this mental illness and comparing it to Holden's characterization in the novel. This paper examines Holden's symptoms by comparing them to those categorized by APA (2013), as well as Zanarini's study (2006). The paper uses Zanarini's (2006) categorization, which divides the symptoms into four major categories: interpersonal, affective, cognitive, and behavioral. Each category includes additional symptoms, most of which are identified by APA (2013) in *DSM-5* as being crucial to the diagnosis of BPD.

2. Interpersonal Symptoms

Symptoms that assist in the diagnosis of BPD are interpersonal in nature, governing the relationship between the individual and their environment: a constant fear of abandonment, a need for special relationships, manipulative tendencies, an addiction to lying, being excessively demanding of and dependent on others, and displaying violent verbal and non-verbal behavior.

People are normally driven to develop emotional attachments, through which they formalize their image of themselves and others. Having secure attachments, especially during childhood, helps to enable healthy emotional growth for an individual. According to APA (2013), one major aspect that identifies individuals as having BPD is the constant fear of abandonment. A patient's fear of separation can

greatly alter their self-image and cause them to believe that they have been abandoned due to failings or inadequacies. They frantically try to avoid both "real or imagined" abandonment (Choudhary, 2017: 207). The roots for fearing abandonment come from having insecure attachments early in life, which contribute to unhealthy psychological development (Mauricio *et al.*, 2007: 141).

In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield seems to dread unforeseen abandonment. He repeatedly expresses his distress about being left alone, especially if he is deserted without being notified ahead of time. He prefers to be emotionally prepared for a sudden departure. Even though he quits several schools, he still hates leaving a school suddenly. "I don't care if it's a sad good-bye or a bad good-bye," Holden declares, "but when I leave a place, I like to know I'm leaving it. If you don't, you feel even worse" (4). This explains why Holden has a preference for museums, where things never change. Imagining his little sister Phoebe visiting the museum, he bitterly dislikes the fact that she too must undergo changes while the things around her in the museum will always remain the same (122). "The best thing, though, in that museum," Holden believed, "was that everything always stayed right where it was. Nobody'd move" (121).

Holden continues to fear being deserted by his friends and acquaintances, who he thinks would pretend to be sleepy and leave the table just so they could avoid spending more time with him. He feels betrayed when people leave him alone at the table after they finish their drinks (75). He imagines Sally Hayes, a girl he is dating, leaving him for another date (151). After a fierce quarrel with his roommate, Stradlater, Holden senses that his roommate no longer acknowledges his existence, leaving him feeling deserted and unwanted (50). Not only does Holden miss the people he loves, but he also misses those he dislikes. "I sort of miss everybody I told about. Even old Stradlater and Ackley, for instance. I think I even miss that goddam Maurice," says Holden as he tells his story in the psychiatric institution (214). In a moment of desperation, he feels totally abandoned as he roams the streets of New York, knowing that he has nobody to go to, no friend to talk to, and no home to stay in. He feels, as he says, "blue as hell" (153).

The major source of Holden's fear of abandonment is his loss of two very significant people in his life: his brother Allie and his girlfriend Jane. The impact of their loss is so profound that Holden starts to lose faith in human relationships. His thoughts often fluctuate between longing for companionship and fearing the loss of it. He is often distraught about the possibility of being exposed once more to the same pain he had to endure earlier in his life. Despite his cynicism and dissatisfaction with most people around him, Holden idolizes both Allie and Jane and considers them the finest companions he has ever encountered.

Allie was two years younger than Holden. He died of leukemia when the family was in Maine—before they moved to New York. "Allie's death," as Bryan (2000) explains, "takes place outside the province of the narrative, but a valuable psychological study might still be made of the progression of Holden's breakdown" (33). The night Allie dies, Holden sleeps in the garage and breaks all the windows with his bare hands until they are drenched with blood. One of his hands is permanently injured as a result of that incident (39). In Holden's descriptions, Allie is always kind and likable; he is also considered the smartest kid in the family (38). Challenging him to find a single thing that he genuinely admires, Phoebe accuses Holden of cynicism and negativity. In response, Holden states that Allie is the one thing he truly respects. Although Phoebe seems unconvinced by this seemingly invalid answer, because, according to her, dead people no longer exist, it shows that to Holden, Allie is still alive. "Just because somebody's dead," Holden believes, "you don't just stop liking them, for God's sake—especially if they were about a thousand times nicer

than the people you know that're alive and all" (171).

Nevertheless, Holden seems highly disturbed by Allie's sudden physical disappearance. He is bothered by the fact that people, on a beautiful sunny day, can start their cars, listen to the radio, and have dinner in a nice place while Allie cannot. "I know it's only his body and all that's in the cemetery, and his soul's in Heaven and all that crap, but I couldn't stand it anyway," he sorrowfully declares (156). When Holden aimlessly walks the streets of New York, he suddenly feels lost. He also feels Allie's presence guiding and saving him every time he feels he is about to disappear.

Every time I came to the end of a block and stepped off the goddam curb, I had this feeling that I'd never get to the other side of the street. I thought I'd just go down, down, down, and nobody'd ever see me again. Boy, did it scare me. You can't imagine. I started sweating like a bastard—my whole shirt and underwear and everything. Then I started doing something else. Every time I'd get to the end of a block I'd make believe I was talking to my brother Allie. I'd say to him, "Allie, don't let me disappear. Allie, don't let me disappear. Allie, don't let me disappear. Please, Allie." And then when I'd reach the other side of the street without disappearing, I'd thank him. (197)

Holden is lost, scared, and sweaty for no reason other than his deep feeling of abandonment. He feels he has been left alone to steer his way through life. He summons the help of his brother Allie, who is no longer with him but whose presence he feels at the corner of every street. It is as if the streets of New York are the map of Holden's life, and at every turn, he panics and asks for his dead's brother help to save him.

Jane Gallagher, on the other hand, is not taken from Holden's life by death like his brother, Allie. She gradually disappears as she starts dating other boys, some of whom are Holden's friends. One summer, Holden has a brief relationship with Jane, who happens to be his neighbor at that time. The two have a lot in common on both emotional and intellectual levels. Holden is so infatuated with this girl that he can recall minor details of her life. He still remembers that she keeps her kings at the back when she plays checkers and that she likes ballet dancing, which she used to practice for two hours a day (31). "Jane was different," he observes (79). He enjoys her company every time they go to the cinema despite his deep dislike of the movies. They hold hands throughout the entire movie without being bothered by how sweaty their hands become (79). With Jane, Holden can be himself and never feels obliged to try to impress her. He compares holding hands with Jane to holding hands with Gertrude Levine, a girl he meets later. He describes the latter's hands as always being "sticky or sweaty" and never like Jane's (120). Jane is Holden's touchstone to whom he compares all other girls. She is also the only person outside of Holden's family that he trusts enough to show his poems that he had written on Allie's mitt (77). A girl like Jane is not easy to forget; "I know old Jane like a book—I still couldn't get her off my brain," Holden sadly admits (76).

Just as he is unable to quit thinking about his dead brother Allie, Holden cannot get Jane off his mind. The impact this girl has on him is strikingly profound in spite of their brief encounter. Occasionally in his story, he suddenly mentions Jane. "Jane Gallagher. Jesus...I couldn't get her off my mind. I really couldn't" (33). He repeatedly attempts to contact her despite knowing she is dating other boys. He always tries to call her, yet he rarely ever goes through with it. He dials, and then he hangs up. His main excuse is that he is not often in the right mood. It is rather a habit of his to blame his mood for not doing many things.

Holden is deeply hurt when he learns that Jane has started dating his roommate Stradlater. Describing his first shock, he says, "I damn near dropped dead" (31). Despite his attempt to hide his irritation, he restlessly tosses and turns in his bed picturing the two together. Even

though she is with Stradlater now, Holden desperately wonders if Jane still thinks about him. He asks Stradlater if Jane has ever mentioned his name, but to his disappointment, she never does (31). He feels rather insignificant, abandoned, and totally forgotten at this point. Knowing that Stradlater is a womanizer, Holden believes that his friend does not deserve a special girl like Jane. Stradlater is careless and takes most of the girls he dates for granted. He does not even remember Jane's name, calling her "Jean," which makes Holden become "so nervous [he] nearly went crazy" (34).

Holden feels abandoned by both Allie and Jane, the two most important people in his life. Although the type and the cause of each abandonment are different, their impact on Holden's psyche is still deep. He constantly searches for a human connection to replace the ones he lost. Yet, he also deeply fears ever having to endure being abandoned again. Therefore, most of his relationships remain transient, temporary, and rather superficial. It is common among patients with BPD to long for human connection with others. The fear of being abandoned gives them a special need for relationships. According to *DSM-5*, these individuals feel "a lack of a meaningful relationship[s], nurturing, and support" (APA, 2013: 664). They compensate for this loss by longing for a relationship—sometimes with mother-like figures (Zanarini, 2006: 32). Holden, for example, strives to convince a woman almost twice his age to go out on a date with him. "She said she was old enough to be my mother and all," he says, "I showed her my goddam gray hair and told her I was forty-two" (153). He often asks people to join him for a drink and sometimes calls friends who are not really close to him, asking to visit them (60).

Throughout the novel, Holden moves desperately from one phone booth to another trying to call his friends—mostly at very late hours. He feels lost, empty, and in dire need of a human connection. For example, the first thing he decides to do when he quits Pencey, his school, is to call somebody; however, he realizes that everybody might be busy at this late hour. He considers calling his brother D. B., his sister Phoebe, his ex-girlfriend Jane, and his friends Sally Hayes and Carl Luce, but he ends up calling nobody. For more than twenty minutes, he stays in a phone booth running names through his head (59). Hesitant and undetermined, Holden starts to call Jane many times, but always ends up backing off. However, when he finally succeeds in calling, either Jane does not answer or her mother picks up the phone, which forces Holden to hang up (116, 136). Carl Luce, Sally Hayes, and Faith Cavendish are the friends he also calls for unimportant reasons. One time, he calls Sally at a very late hour to tell her that he is going to come to fix her Christmas tree. Surprised by the odd timing, Sally asks him to call another day (151). He also phones his teacher, Mr. Antolini, late at night just to chat. This call is made so late at night that Holden thinks he might have woken his teacher's wife because she took too long to answer the phone (174).

Holden seems in desperate need of establishing any sort of human connection. While in the hotel, he hires a prostitute just for the sake of having a conversation with somebody. "Don't you feel like talking for a while?" he asks the surprised prostitute. "Are you in a very big hurry?" (95). He occasionally tries to make people stay longer with him. "I tried to get them to stick around for a while, but they wouldn't. So, we said good-bye and all" (75). When riding in taxis, Holden starts conversations that usually perplex the taxi drivers. He often asks them where the ducks go when the whole lake is frozen (60). In a way, the ducks resemble Holden as, during the winter, they no longer have a home; hence, he is quite concerned about their whereabouts.

BPD patients seem to be masters of the art of deception. They are remarkably skilled at getting what they want from people. To reach their goals, rather than expressing their demands directly, they manipulate others through underhanded tactics at the expense of the others' interests. Nevertheless, they sometimes seem unconscious of

their manipulative behavior (Zanarini 2006: 29). Whether he is aware of his behavior or not, Holden Caulfield sometimes appears to use people to help him feel secure and connected to others. To mask his feelings of loneliness, he repeatedly phones his friends at late, inconvenient hours just to discuss insignificant subjects. On one occasion, he admits to having manipulated a schoolmate into buying a typewriter that the latter did not even need. On his way out of Pencey, he wakes up Fredrick Woodruff, to whom he has lent a typewriter, and succeeds at persuading him to buy it even though he does not need it. At that moment, Holden is about to quit his school and is thus in dire need of money (52). Due to having symptoms of BPD, Holden is rather unconsciously exploiting others to enforce his right to live.

Due to their manipulative nature, people with BPD present as pathological liars with chronic and compulsive lying tendencies. They are skilled at maneuvering people to avoid confrontation and get what they want. "Borderline patients often lie or, at least, tell different people different versions of their truth" (Zanarini, 2006: 34). They lie to protect themselves from being punished or humiliated. Holden, in the same manner, is a pathological liar who admits to lacking the ability of stopping. Once he starts, he can lie for hours without stopping. "I'm the most terrific liar you ever saw in your life," Holden admits, "if I'm on my way to the store to buy a magazine, even, and somebody asks me where I'm going, I'm liable to say I'm going to the opera" (16). For example, when entering his building, he lies about his destination and tells the doorman he is going to see the Dickinsons, not to his parents' apartment (157).

Holden often lies about his identity, with and without apparent reason. When he lies about his age, it is usually because he wants to drink alcohol. He often pretends to be older than he really is, especially because his height and grey hair help him to do so. When asked for his age, he says that he is twenty-two (91). When he wants to date an older woman, he declares his age to be forty-two (153). However, Holden does not seem to have a valid reason for lying about his name. He gives a different name every time he introduces himself. Sometimes he goes by "Rudolf Schmidt," and other times, he is "Jim Steele" (54, 73). It seems to be an attempt to mask his real identity because he is probably ashamed of what he has turned out to be—a dropout smoker with no friends, no place to go to, and no future to look forward to.

To draw sympathy from others, Holden also lies about his health. He pretends to have a bad leg and starts limping to fool people (157). He also claims to be undergoing surgery sometime soon (58). At one point, he even states that he has had surgery on his clavichord (96). Ironically, Holden is too young to realize that the clavichord is actually a European musical keyboard instrument, not a body part.

Holden sometimes lies to please other people. He tells his teacher, Mr. Spencer, what he wants to hear, just so that he can end the conversation as soon as possible. He informs him that he himself is a careless student and that Mr. Spencer has done all he could to improve Holden's poor situation (12). He also lies to the woman on the train by telling her that her son is a fine student who adapts very well. Later in the narration, he admits that this woman's son is nothing but a loser (71). He even confesses his love for Sally Hayes. He tells her that she is the only reason he is in New York now and that if she were not there, he would have been somewhere else. At the same time, he admits that if he had any feeling for Hayes, it would probably be hatred (131).

Holden's habitual lying seems to be rooted in his need to be loved. By pretending to be ill, he believes he is likely to attract people's sympathy and attention. Also, by giving people nice, yet insincere, compliments, he thinks he can gain their admiration. Holden also lies

to avoid uncomfortable situations. He is not the type of liar who believes his own lies. Very conscious of his behavior, Holden admits that lying is a terrible habit and to his inability to change it.

With Holden, it is uncertain in which situations he will revert to lying. The credibility of his narration, therefore, is questionable, not only because he might be intentionally lying or hiding the truth, but also because borderline individuals' sense of the truth is quite distorted. The reason for this is probably "their varied and shifting sense of identity" (Zanarini, 2006: 34). For example, Holden strongly argues that the elevator man told him that it was only five dollars for a throw with the prostitute, but the elevator man and the prostitute insist that it is ten dollars instead. Eventually, the elevator man knocks him down and forcefully grabs the money (101). It is not obvious to the reader, however, where the truth lies. Whether it is five dollars, as Holden claims, or ten, as the others do, is not clear. Holden, despite his insistence on telling the truth, might be mistaken. This is not the only time when Holden thinks he is right while people are telling him otherwise. During a heated argument with Sally Hayes, she strongly recommends that he not shout, but Holden insists that he was not shouting in the first place (131). Nevertheless, from the angry tone of his voice and the curses he uses in the conversation, it is likely that Sally is closer to telling the truth.

Holden's manipulative behavior is closely connected to his demanding nature. On more than one occasion, he is both persistent and determined to get answers to his questions. Borderline patients, according to Zanarini (2006), can become very insistent. They are even told by "their family and their previous treaters that [their] demandingness is off-putting" (30). Likewise, Holden is told to "grow up" and "drop it," yet he keeps bombarding his friend Luce with personal questions (146). "Let's get one thing straight," says Luce, "I refuse to answer any typical Caulfield questions tonight. When in hell are you going to grow up?" (146). Luce's remark about the typical questions indicates that this is not a random incident, but rather a regular, annoying habit of Holden's.

According to Zanarini (2006), borderline patients are distinguished by both dependent and counter-dependent traits, indicating that they are dependent, yet helpful at the same time (33). Despite their unrealistic demands of the people around them, people with BPD are both generous and helpful. They use their generosity to establish connections with others (Zanarini, 2006: 33). On the one hand, on more than one occasion, Holden appears to be unrealistically dependent on people. He calls his friends at very late hours to ask about insignificant matters. He also brings a prostitute to his hotel room just for the sake of having a conversation. On the other hand, he is also helpful and generous to both his friends and total strangers. Being a good writer, he does not hesitate to write a composition for his roommate Stradlater even after learning that he is dating Jane (28). Holden also feels sympathetic to Ackley, who usually spends Saturday nights alone in his room, asking him to join him at the cinema (36). Holden often lends belongings like his hat, coat, and typewriter to his schoolmates. Knowing that Sally Hayes likes the orchestra, he is generous enough to buy her a ticket despite his dislike of what he considers "phony," such as the orchestra (116). In addition, when Holden meets two nuns in a restaurant, he offers to make a donation even though the nuns had not asked for charity (109).

A study by Mauricio et al. (2006) claims that there is a meditated relationship between the fear of abandonment on the one hand and physical and verbal violence on the other (139). Due to their unmanageable impulsivity, individuals with BPD engage in fits of anger that negatively affect the people around them. Their tendency to use verbal and non-verbal violence is not always intentional and is often followed by remorseful self-reproach. In Dutton and

Starzomski's (1993) study, 75 out of 120 women who were married to borderline personality men reported being subjected to physical and verbal violence (327). A collaboration of other BPD symptoms renders them easily infuriated and uncontrollably violent. These symptoms include "unstable interpersonal relationships, unstable sense of self, intense and phasic anger, and impulsivity" (Dutton and Starzomski, 1993: 330).

Despite his harmless appearance, Holden Caulfield shows, on more than one occasion, a tendency to use violence against others. For example, he uses verbal violence against some of his schoolmates. When he bullies his friend Ackley and calls him a kid, Holden finds joy because it brings the "sadist" out in him (22). "He didn't like it when you called him 'Ackley kid'....I was sixteen and he was eighteen. It drove him mad when I called him 'Ackley kid'", Holden says (21). To kill boredom and give himself pleasure, Holden also enjoys calling people he dislikes "prince," knowing how much it annoys them (24). Sometimes he pictures himself beating other boys. He uses graphic details in his imaginary violent scenarios, but he does not have the stamina to act. "I'd feel I ought to sock the guy in the jaw or something—break his goddam jaw. Only, I wouldn't have the guts to do it," he confesses (89). In his rather twisted imagination, Holden enjoys the idea of being beaten by others because it proves to him that he is strong enough for a fight, even if he loses it. When he gets knocked down by his roommate Stradlater, Holden feels proud of the blood on his face as it makes him look "tough" (45).

3. Affective Symptoms

In addition to interpersonal symptoms, BPD patients suffer from affective symptoms that are characterized by emotions, including emotional instability, moodiness, feelings of emptiness, and feelings of hopelessness. Suffering from emotional instability and dysphoric effects is one problem of borderline patients. Unlike people with bipolar disorder, whose mood changes persist for days, borderline individuals' dysphoric effects last for a few hours. These feelings range from intense happiness to deep sadness. According to Widiger (2006), people with BPD may have affective instability that ranges from "intense episodic dysphoria, irritability, or anxiety usually lasting a few hours and only rarely more than a few days" (66). These feelings also include anxiety, panic attacks, hopelessness, emptiness, and helplessness (Zanarini, 2006: 20).

Holden experiences most of these feelings. He suddenly bounces from one feeling to another in a matter of minutes. He recounts that he gets obsessed with anxiety, which becomes so debilitating that he cannot even go to the bathroom (40). He often expresses a deep sense of depression that blocks his ability to think. "I was feeling so depressed I didn't even think," he says, "that's the whole trouble. When you're feeling very depressed, you can't even think" (91). Holden also has a deep feeling of helplessness. He feels that he cannot get anything done and that he is in a "bad" and "lousy shape" (131).

Twice in the novel, Holden falls into an abrupt fit of crying for no apparent reason. At one time, when he is aimlessly sitting on the radiator doing nothing, he suddenly has an urge to cry. He starts to feel extremely sad, depressed, and lonely (153). The second incident occurs when he goes to his house to present his sister Phoebe with a gift, where he experiences a sudden panic attack.

Then, all of a sudden, I started to cry. I couldn't help it. I did it so nobody could hear me, but I did it. It scared hell out of old Phoebe when I started doing it, and she came over and tried to make me stop, but once you get started, you can't just stop on a goddam dime. I was still sitting on the edge of the bed when I did it, and she put her old arm around my neck, and I put my arm around her, too, but I still couldn't stop for a long time. I thought I was going to choke to death or something.

(179)

Holden's emotional instability is manifested in his sudden fits of rage over totally insignificant matters. He even imagines himself inflicting pain on others. When he notices curses written on a school fence, he gets so overwhelmed that he pictures himself catching the one who did it and terribly hurting them. "I kept wanting to kill whoever'd written it" (201). However, Holden sometimes has a sudden euphoric feeling of happiness for no reason at all. "I felt so damn happy," Holden says, "if you want to know the truth. I don't know why" (213).

Holden's expression of anger is sometimes followed by an immediate feeling of guilt. This, according to APA (2013), is one of the characteristics of borderline personality individuals. They usually have "expressions of anger...often followed by shame and guilt and contribute to the feeling they have of being evil" (664). For example, when Holden gets involved in a heated argument with Sally Hayes, the latter bursts into tears. Scared and ashamed, Holden starts to "apologize like a madman" (134). When she does not accept his apology, he feels full of shame and regret, especially when he thinks that she might choose to tell her family about what has happened.

Borderline persons are extremely moody, and their moods can rapidly change in response to environmental triggers. These sudden changes are attributed to the individuals' vulnerability, which makes them susceptible to outer stimuli triggering their anger, panic, and an inability to deal with difficult situations (Widiger, 2006: 66). Instead of having mood swings that last for weeks, individuals with BPD have rapid mood changes in response to outer stimuli. "These mood changes," says Paris (2006), "are not spontaneous, but occur in response to environmental triggers" (182). The triggers that lead to such mood shifts are not always clear and direct but can often be subtle and indirect. The intensity of the mood changes can even cloud their judgment and can lead to self-destructive, impulsive behaviors (Zanarini, 2006: 22).

Holden admits to being very moody. He retreats from doing many things because he is not in the mood. Many times, he plans to call his ex-girlfriend Jane Gallagher, but he quits because he does not feel like it. A lot of things seem to depend on Holden's mood. "I can be quite sarcastic when I'm in the mood," he says (21). Holden can appear rather happy and childish, throwing snowballs at his friends (35). He also starts to laugh for no apparent reason. "All of a sudden I did something I shouldn't have. I laughed. And I have one of these very loud, stupid laughs," Holden states (134). He suddenly begins to dance, even when it is inappropriate to do so. For example, when going to say a sad goodbye to his sister Phoebe, he then suddenly plays music, and the two start to dance (201).

However, seeing Holden in a cheerful mood is quite rare. It could be a beautiful day outside, but Holden chooses to feel very miserable. "It was getting daylight outside. Boy, I felt miserable. I felt so depressed, you can't imagine," he sadly declares (98). It is not unusual for Holden to be very nervous or rather angry. He often describes himself as "a nervous guy" (34). Holden also gets angry for no apparent reason. Once he gets into a heated argument with Sally Hayes, screams at her, and then immediately proposes marriage to her. Even Sally is totally shocked by the sudden transformation in his behavior. "If you want to know the truth," Holden says, "I don't even know why I started all that stuff with her" (134). He is uncertain about the feelings he holds for her. Sometimes he loves her, but at other times he does not. "I sort of hated old Sally by the time we got in the cab," he says right after his marriage proposal (128).

People with BPD may display emotional instability, including anger, irritability, depression, and anxiety, which can last for hours or days (Dutton and Starzomski, 1993: 323). Nevertheless, the causes of these shifts in feelings are undetermined. BPD patients possibly go

through fits of differing temperaments to draw attention to their ongoing pain (Zanarini, 2006: 21). In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden's dissatisfaction with almost everything around him is reflected in his anger. First, the tone of his narration is full of rage. He often uses negative or curse words to describe people, things, and events: "goddam autobiography," "crummy place," "terrible school," "bastard." He has a disrespectful attitude toward his teachers, calling them "old Thurmer" and "old Spencer." When Stradlater explains to him that the composition Holden has written for him is about the wrong topic, Holden gets frustrated and tears up the paper. He even strikes Stradlater, which ends up with Holden getting himself hurt because he is not as physically strong as his friend (41). Holden appears to be unreasonably furious, reacting in an exaggerated manner to simple matters. He directs his anger at people who are not really the source of his pain. For example, as he leaves the school, he yells out loud, "sleep tight, ya morons," to all his schoolmates, some of whom he probably does not even know (52). The words he shouts are significant because they indicate his complete rejection of the adolescent world and his refusal to play a part in it (Throwbridge, 2000: 23). Throughout the novel, Holden's feelings are on an emotional roller coaster, shifting from one negative feeling to another.

Not only do they shift quickly from one mood to another, but borderline patients are also very inconsistent with their opinions. They tend to go from total love to total hate in nearly no time at all (Zanarini, 2006: 28). Holden, who repeatedly expresses his dislike for the cinema industry, still goes to the movies to kill time (36). This contradiction is also seen minutes after his marriage proposal to Sally Hayes, when he admits that he was "beginning to hate her" (133). Holden views people, as well as things, in black and white, with no grey shades in between. He tends to go to the extremes with regard to his expression of likes and dislikes by either ultimately loving or absolutely hating the person. He almost idolizes Allie, Phoebe, and Jane Gallagher, while he paints his former teachers and classmates as devils.

DSM-5 indicates that people with BPD have a continuous feeling of emptiness (APA, 2013: 664). By feeling lost about their long-term goals and about what to do with their lives, they are in constant search of something to do or someone to talk to (Widiger, 2006: 66). Throughout the novel, Holden Caulfield seems to be lost and does not know what to do with his life. He keeps quitting schools, leaving home for days, jumping from one hotel to another, changing friends, and aimlessly roaming the streets of New York. He sometimes takes a taxi with no certain destination in mind (107). Sometimes, he feels empty, with nothing to do but to stare at the ceiling of his hotel room. "I didn't have anything else to do," he says, "so I kept sitting on the radiator and counting these little white squares on the floor" (152).

When he is asked about his future, Holden usually responds vaguely. He certainly has no plans. When his little sister Phoebe confronts him about his plans, he clearly states that he has no intention of becoming either a scientist or a lawyer like his father (172). He does not think his permanent hand injury hinders any of his future plans because he has no intention of becoming a surgeon, a violinist, or "anything anyway" (39). Holden's future seems empty and unplanned. Answering his teacher, Holden says: "oh, I feel some concern for my future... but not too much, I guess" (14). Having little faith in his own abilities, Holden believes that he is the only stupid member in his family (67). His self-esteem appears to be rather distorted and damaged. According to Zeigler-Hill and Abraham (2006), "individuals with high levels of borderline personality features will experience more fluctuations in their state [of] self-esteem and affect over time than individuals with low levels of borderline personality features" (670).

His plans for the future are vague and unrealistic. When Phoebe asks him what he would rather be, he says that he wants to be the catcher in the rye. He pictures himself as the only adult in an open rye field, where his main job is to catch the children who are about to fall (173). Deep down, he might want to attribute meaning and give purpose to his apparently empty life by saving the little ones before it is too late. "Holden wants his life to be vital without appropriation, innocent without retrogression" (Bryan, 2000: 35). Holden's behavior with his sister Phoebe and his repeated attempts to save her prove his genuine desire to protect children (Throwbridge, 2000: 28). He probably desperately thinks that it is too late for him to be saved, but he does not want the same to happen to those who still stand a chance.

The feeling of emptiness these individuals have is often accompanied by a deep state of hopelessness. This negative condition is manifested in the individual's loss of faith in life and in people. In Holden's case, it is truly very hard to find someone or something he genuinely likes, except for Allie, Phoebe, and Jane. His perception of life and people is gloomy and pessimistic. He repeats the expression "I hate" quite often. For example, he is totally unsatisfied with schools and the educational system, and he even believes that expensive schools attract dishonest people (4). He can hardly relate to any of his schoolmates like Stradlater, Ackley Morrow, and many others, frequently criticizing their weird behaviors and unacceptable manners.

Holden is passionate in expressing his dislike for the whole entertainment industry. "I hate the movies like poison," he angrily declares (29). That is why he disapproves of his brother D. B.'s work in Hollywood. He thinks D. B. is a great writer who is wasting his talent in the fake cinema. Holden also does not admire the theatre and its actors, whom he finds unqualified, unrealistic, and exaggerated (117). In fact, he considers most people around him pretentious and unauthentic, especially those who use exaggerated positive expressions, such as the word "grand," which extremely annoy him (9).

Living in the city of New York is another challenge Holden must face. He finds it noisy and very annoying.

I hate living in New York and all. Taxicabs, and Madison Avenue buses, with the drivers and all always yelling at you to get out at the rear door, and being introduced to phony guys that call the Lunts angels, and going up and down in elevators when you just want to go outside, and guys fitting your pants all the time at Brooks, and people always. (130)

Old Spencer, as Holden likes to call him, is his former teacher. Seeing how troubled Holden is, Spencer tries to save him by teaching him how to deal with life's troubles. He explains that life is like a game and that he should learn how to play by its rules. To Holden, life is way too serious to be called a game: "if you get on the side where all the hot-shots are, then it's a game, all right—I'll admit that. But if you get on the other side, where there aren't any hot-shots, then what's a game about it? Nothing. No game" (8).

4. Cognitive Symptoms

It is not uncommon for patients who have experienced neglect or abuse during childhood to have cognitive problems; therefore, some borderline patients show cognitive problems such as "depersonalization, derealization, reality-based delusions, and dissociative problems" (Zanarini, 2006: 22). On more than one occasion, Holden shows symptoms of reality-based delusions. For example, he takes a real incident that happened to him and fabricates an entirely imaginary story around it. When he has a fight at the hotel with the elevator man who knocks him down, Holden begins to imagine that he has been shot and that he has a bullet in his stomach. He even starts to act accordingly.

About halfway to the bathroom, I sort of started pretending I had a bullet in my guts....Now I was on the way to the bathroom to get a good shot of bourbon or something to steady my nerves and help me really go into action. I pictured myself coming out of the goddam bathroom, dressed and all, with my automatic in my pocket, and staggering around a little bit. Then I'd walk downstairs, instead of using the elevator. I'd hold onto the banister and all, with this blood trickling out of the side of my mouth a little at a time. (103)

This incident is not very different from the time when Holden walks outside in the winter. Worried about getting pneumonia, he immediately starts to imagine his death, its effect on his family, and all the people coming to his funeral (154).

Holden frequently acknowledges that he is mentally inadequate. He believes that he is the stupidest member of his family. He keeps repeating that he is often so forgetful and "absent-minded" that he keeps giving the taxi driver the wrong address (60). He goes further, calling himself "mad" and "crazy." "But I'm crazy," he says, "I swear to God I am" (103). Heiser and Miller (2006) illustrate the world inside Holden's mind.

The things in Holden's world are always jumping up and down or bouncing or scattering "like madmen." Holden always lets us know when he has insight into the absurdity of the endless absurd situations[,] which make up the life of a sixteen-year-old by exclaiming, "It killed me." In a phony world, Holden feels compelled to reinforce his sincerity and truthfulness constantly with "[i]t really is" or "[i]t really did." (9)

BPD patients also experience dissociative problems, including shifting from one identity to another and sometimes stating they have no real identity at all (APA, 2013: 291). Thus, these individuals simultaneously maintain different identities (Zanarini, 2006: 24). This is different from schizophrenia, in which patients hear voices that do not exist, but rather is an expression of the individual's mood change and not an extremely abnormal personality trait (Widiger, 2006: 66). These variant identities reflect the distorted self-image BPD patients have.

Although the case of Holden Caulfield is not as severe as that defined by APA (2013) in *DSM-5*, he sometimes shows signs of losing track of who he really is. Holden admits to having acted like an older, and sometimes a younger, version of himself depending on his mood and on what the situation requires. He does not like it when people require him "to act his age" (9). He certainly wants to act the way he feels. "I was sixteen then," he says, "and I'm seventeen now, and sometimes I act like I'm about thirteen...sometimes I act a lot older than I am—I really do—but people never notice it" (9). Holden also lies about his name, sometimes going by the name "Rudolf Schmidt" and sometimes by "Jim Steele" (54, 73).

5. Behavioral Symptoms

According to Zanarini (2006), the last group of symptoms are behavioral, and they include self-harm, suicidality, impulsivity, irresponsibility with money, alcoholism, and education and employment problems (23). Self-harm, in its different manifestations, is common among BPD patients. It is a self-soothing technique that they use to calm their excessive rage (Zanarini, 2006: 24). Developing an eating disorder is another way BPD patients harm themselves. Those individuals express their rage in multiple ways, one of which is through eating. They tend to go to extremes, either by eating excessively or barely at all (Paris, 2006: 184). Holden considers himself "a very light eater" (107), which on the surface does not appear to be a serious issue. However, when his doctor tells him to eat more, Holden refuses to comply (107). It is obvious that Holden's weight poses a problem to his well-being, but he has no desire to change this harmful habit.

Another aspect of BPD is suicidality. Patients who suffer from a mood

disorder are prone to be suicidal. Even though these suicidal ideas are not persistent, they do occur from time to time. It is rare to find that a borderline patient has not contemplated suicide at least once during their course of illness (Paris, 2006: 181). Because borderline patients have these thoughts for a long period of time, many do end up attempting suicide. Some succeed, but most do not. Such suicide attempts tend to peak when patients are in their twenties (Paris, 2006: 183).

The Catcher in the Rye is not a tragedy that ends with the hero's death, nor does Holden actually attempt to end his own life. However, he repeatedly expresses his desire to suddenly disappear from this life; sometimes he even describes how he wishes to disappear. For example, he thinks about jumping out the window or sitting right on top of an atomic bomb (48, 141). He masks his deep desires by using an exaggerated, sarcastic tone, yet his true desperate voice is clearly heard when he says, "I felt so lonesome, all of a sudden, I almost wished I was dead" (48). "Holden is merely depressed to the point of contemplating suicide...since Holden cannot live up to his Christ ideal, he will choose to emulate the only other character in the Bible he likes, the lunatic" (Throwbridge, 2000: 23).

Holden recklessly walks unprotected through the cold streets of New York during winter. Risking his health, he does not seem to care about getting pneumonia. Instead, he begins to imagine his own funeral. He starts to feel sorry for his parents for losing another child and sad for his sister Phoebe, who will be shocked by the news. He pictures his family sorting out his clothes to donate them to charity. He is furious, though, that all the people he hates will come to his funeral (156). People around Holden are worried about his psychological health. His teacher Mr. Antolini warns him that he is not on the right path. "I have a feeling that you're riding for some kind of a terrible, terrible fall. But I don't honestly know what kind," his teacher says (186). This fall could very possibly mean self-harm or suicide, but his teacher does not say those exact words.

Borderline individuals typically have unstable emotions and behaviors. They often find themselves struggling with episodic impulsivity (Zanarini, 2006: 27). They make hasty decisions that often lead to undesirable results. These decisions sometimes lead to trouble or jeopardize their well-being (Dutton and Starzomski, 1993: 322). Holden Caulfield apparently has an impulsive nature. Without considering the consequences, he carelessly makes irrational decisions that often astonish people. Still bleeding following a fight with his roommate Stradlater, he immediately goes to Ackley. Instead of asking for help, he asks him to play canasta. Even Ackley is shocked by Holden's inappropriate timing (50). A few moments later, and despite his lack of interest in religion, he asks Ackley about joining a monastery (50). Holden either does not really know what he wants, or he just blurts out ideas because of his unorganized thinking.

He sometimes enacts irrational, inexplicable behaviors, such as when he gets onto a bus with a big snowball in his hands. The bus driver is concerned that Holden might hurt somebody, so he makes him throw it outside (36). Despite his young age, Holden suddenly proposes to Sally Hayes, whom he does not even like. "I felt like marrying her the minute I saw her. I'm crazy. I didn't even like her much," he admits (124). Holden makes hasty decisions that could terribly affect his future. He very suddenly decides to quit school in the middle of the night. He packs his bags and leaves without saying goodbye to his friends (51). He also decides to leave his family, get out of New York, and head west to work in another state. He creates a scenario in his head in which he pretends to be deaf and mute so that no one will talk to him (198). According to Throwbridge (2000), the deaf-mute image is a significant metaphor that shows that "Holden's disillusionment is complete" (27).

Due to their episodic impulsivity, borderline individuals are prone to being financially irresponsible (Dutton and Starzomski, 1993: 321). They often engage in gambling and binge spending, and Holden is likely no exception. Although he is not described in the novel as a gambler, he still spends money irresponsibly. Even though he is young and has no source of income, he spends a lot of money in a short period of time; "I spent a fortune since I left Pencey," Holden admits (156). He is often unaware of how much money he has. Offering to pay for people's drinks in the bar, Holden declares himself a "spendthrift at heart" (107). When he offers to donate ten dollars to the nuns, he regrets it immediately because he realizes that most of his cash is gone (113). Because he has spent most of what he has, he starts using the bus instead of taxis by the end of the week (153).

Individuals with BPD are prone to self-damaging behavior like excessive drinking and smoking (Dutton and Starzomski, 1993: 332). Despite his young age, Holden's impulsive behavior is also manifested through his constant smoking and drinking. "There wasn't anything to do except smoke and drink," Holden says. (86). He describes himself as a "heavy smoker," but out of courtesy, he sometimes lies to others, calling himself a "moderate smoker" (5, 182). However, Holden repeatedly smokes, which proves that the former description of him is much closer to the truth. He even admits to smoking at least two packs a day since he left his school, which is rather a lot for someone of his age (100).

Holden is also a heavy drinker who boasts of his drinking abilities. "One thing I have," he says, "is a terrific capacity. I can drink all night and not even show it" (90). He attributes some aspects of his bad behavior to his being "drunk as hell" (149). His favorite drink throughout the novel is scotch and soda. Despite being seventeen, he still manages to fool bartenders with his height and grey hair; however, on some occasions, they ask for verification of his age.

In the lives of young adolescents, emotional impulsivity, feelings of emptiness, and mood changes negatively influence school performance. Skodol (2006) compares the school performance of patients with BPD to others who have depression, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder. The numbers show that borderline patients spend fewer years in school (156). Skodol (2006) also proves that the rates of unemployment and job changes among borderline patients are higher than among people with other disorders (156). They often experience extreme pressure at work and in their social lives due to their symptoms, which others can find difficult to tolerate (Choudhary, 2017: 257).

Holden Caulfield is presented in the novel as a dropout. Schools keep dismissing him, mostly because of his poor performance. He is dismissed from Pencey Prep School, and, before that, from Elkton Hills because of failing nearly every subject (13). English is the only subject Holden is good at. He fails four out of five subjects in one semester (10). When he fails oral expression, Holden assumes that it is too difficult for him to stick to a point without digressing. He often finds digression more interesting than the main point (187). In a letter to his history teacher, Mr. Spencer, Holden writes, "it is all right with me if you flunk me though as I am flunking everything else except English anyway" (12).

There are two possible main reasons for Holden's poor performance at school. First, his rebellious character prevents him from abiding by the rules. When his roommate Stradlater asks him to write a descriptive composition about a place, Holden writes about his brother's Allie's baseball mitt. In his opinion, it is still descriptive even if it is not exactly about a place. Stradlater becomes furious and bluntly explains to Holden what seems to be the problem. "You always do everything backwards," Stradlater says, "no wonder you're flunking the hell out of here...you don't do one damn thing the way

you're supposed to" (41). Also, as the manager of the fencing team in his school, Holden is supposed to guard the equipment and not leave it unattended in the subway, which he carelessly does (3). The second reason why Holden continues to fail is that he keeps making excuses for himself. "Don't worry about me," he says to Mr. Spencer. "I'll be all right. I'm just going through a phase right now. Everybody goes through phases and all, don't they?" (15).

It is quite common for some psychological disorders to co-occur. According to *DSM-5*, "borderline personality disorder often co-occurs with depressive or bipolar disorder" (APA, 2013: 666). Anxiety and BPD are highly correlated according to statistics (Pfohl, 2006: 142). Holden shows signs of obsessive-compulsive disorder. He admits to having some "nervous habits" that force him to do something repeatedly (26). For instance, he keeps turning the water tap on and off as he speaks to Stradlater in the bathroom (26). Another nervous habit he has is lighting a match and letting it burn until he can no longer hold it, and then dropping it in the ashtray (129).

6. Environmental Factors

In addition to genetic influences, environmental factors play an important role in the development of BPD. Silk et al. (2006) assume that the personality splitting used by borderline patients is a result of viewing both parents, or at least one of them, in incoherent, contradictory positions that are divided between nurturing and punishing (42). A child, as a consequence, loses the ability to comprehend how one person is capable of embodying two contradictory values, which results in children splitting the same person into love and hate categories (Silk et al., 2006: 44). In addition to the threat of punishment, children might have faced the threat of being abandoned by one or both of their parents, especially in the early stages of life when they are totally dependent on them. That can result in a child's use of manipulative lies just to keep their parent(s) close (Silk et al., 2006: 46). Silk et al. (2006) conclude that "borderline pathology was the result of disturbed development in response to maternal inconsistency and lack of maternal empathic attainment" (47).

Other studies have found, however, that being a victim of childhood abuse does not necessarily lead to developing BPD. Other factors are equally as important, such as having an inconsistent and insufficient nurturing environment, especially if it is chronic (Khehra and Srishti, 2014: 325).

When caregivers are available and consistently responsive during childhood, secure attachments and corresponding positive internal working models of self and other[s] develop and promote healthy developmental trajectories and relationship patterns. By contrast, disruptions in the parent-child bond are the precursors to insecure attachment and corresponding negative models of self and/or others, thus promoting maladaptive relationship patterns that can continue to regulate relationship behavior into adulthood. (Mauricio et al., 2007: 139)

From the opening of *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden informs the reader that he is unwilling to share details about his parents because that would give his parents "two hemorrhages apiece" (1). This may indicate that Holden's parents are either secretive or very controlling. Not only they are unwilling to share information about their lives, but they also order their son not to do so. Holden says that he does not want to get into the details of his "lousy childhood" with his very "occupied" parents (1). It is rather obvious that Holden is neither happy nor proud of his childhood, in which he seems to have suffered episodes of abandonment and neglect by his busy parents. Bryan (2000) assumes that one of Holden's problems is that he does not provide the reader with sufficient information about his childhood

and the trauma he went through. "We know little more than that the family has been generally disrupted since and that Holden has not come to grips with life as he should have," Bryan says (2000: 32). Holden grows up in a house with parents who practice different religions, which turns him into an atheist (68). This is probably the first conflict he faces in his childhood: seeing the two people who are supposed to be examples for him holding different beliefs. Holden does not seem to trust his parents, as he tries to avoid them throughout the entire novel. He does not want to call home so that he will not have to talk to them if they pick up the phone. When he goes home to say goodbye to Phoebe, he hides in the closet when his mother arrives in order to avoid her (178).

Holden has a troubled relationship with his mother. He describes her as both "hysterical" and "insane" (51, 55). She, as Holden pictures her, is "nervous as hell" and smokes cigarettes all night (158). She changed a lot after the death of her son Allie and is starting to feel very unhealthy (107). Holden and his mother do not seem to agree on many things. For example, she does not like his girlfriend Jane, the person who Holden admires the most following his brother, Allie. "My mother always thought Jane and her mother were sort of snubbing her or something when they didn't say hello," he says (77). She obviously does not care what kind of skates her son prefers. Instead of buying him racing skates, she gets him hockey skates, which makes him rather sad (52). In his brief description of her, Holden's mother appears preoccupied and absent-minded and does not pay attention to her children's needs. She is physically unwell and always complains of having "a splitting headache" (178). When she catches her ten-year-old daughter smoking, she does not seem concerned. She also forces her daughter to eat food that she does not like (177).

Conversely, very little information is given about Holden's father. All the reader can tell is that he seems to be very strict and is possibly a source of fear for his children. Phoebe keeps threatening that "Daddy'll kill you" if he knows that Holden has been dismissed from school again (165). Apparently, Holden's strict upbringing does not work well for him. His father wants him to go to Yale or Princeton—prestigious colleges that Holden does not care much about. However, the characters of Holden's parents can only be read through his eyes because the story is told from his point of view. Holden avoids mentioning his parents, unless it is essential, due to his secretive nature and because the mention of his parents is apparently a source of pain.

7. Conclusion

This paper tests a hypothesis against textual evidence, concluding that most of the symptoms of BPD identified by medical studies apply to the character of Holden Caulfield. Most of these symptoms (interpersonal, affective, cognitive, behavioral, and environmental) that lead to developing this disorder seem to be present in the character of Holden Caulfield. The details of these symptoms as explained in medical research mirror to a great degree Holden's behavior, thoughts, and feelings. There is no evidence to suggest that J. D. Salinger had BPD in mind when he was forming the character of Holden. However, he depicts a personality so true to life that it is believable that Holden suffers from a real psychological illness. There is a lot of resemblance between what is said in medical books about BPD and what is seen in the character of Holden Caulfield. Because fiction depicts life in all its aspects, it is not surprising to find that some literary characters suffer from mental or physical illnesses. This paper, therefore, uses modern medical research to investigate the reality of a fictional world and to determine how true to life this reality is.

Bio

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