



Narcissistic Personality Disorder Expressed by Homelander's Character in "The Boys" TV Series

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Abstract. The aim of this research is to identify the signs of narcissistic personality disorder that is present in Homelander from The Boys TV Series (2019) and its effect on his life based on Caligor, Levy, and Yeoman's theory. The researchers examined the dialogue by Homelander, which qualitative descriptive method was employed in this study. The researchers employed purposive sampling to collect the data from Homelander's dialogue and actions. The results of this research found that Homelander has proven to have all nine signs of narcissistic personality disorder and due to having all the nine signs of NPD, Homelander's life is confirmed to have been affected by this condition.

Keywords: Mental Disorder, Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NDP), TV Series.

1 Introduction

In this era of digitalization, a lot of things have changed, including literature. It transforms between mediums, from text to visual, to animation, or in this case, live action. Films have many genres, and for the past decades, superhero films have become the most-watched movie genre. According to NYFA (2017), the majority of the highest-grossing movies are superhero movies due to their ability to appeal to a wide range of audiences, regardless of age or background. Superheroes are universally recognized and admired characters, with many people having grown up reading comic books or watching superhero cartoons. These films tend to have high production values, with visually stunning action sequences and impressive special effects. In addition, Superhero films often feature a mix of action, drama, and comedy and usually, these films can tackle all kinds of issues that the characters have to go through, making them appealing to a broad range of movie-goers. The issues of mental health are among them. There is a huge collection of superhero movies that have dealt with mental health issues. The researcher chooses to discuss The Boys TV series, which is based on a comic book of the same name.

The Boys is an American superhero-drama comic series created by writer Garth Ennis and artist Darick Robertson. The Boys #1 is the first and debut issue of The Boys and the first part of Volume One: The Name of the Game. It was originally published on August 16, 2006. The story follows Hughie Campbell, who is on a mission to avenge

his dead girlfriend after she was “liquified” by a supes (short for a superhero) with super speed by running straight through her. The vengeful Hughie then meets vigilante Butcher, who offers him a chance to pay revenge in exchange for exposing the dark side of the superhero community to the public. And then, after several encounters with other supes, they finally meet Homelander.

Homelander is the leader of The Seven, one of the strongest supes in the world. With the appearance of a movie star, chiseled features, a patriotic superhero suit, and the power of a god, he is considered to be the greatest superhero alive. Besides the ability to freely soar the sky, he also possesses super strength and hearing, as well as x-ray vision, which makes him see through nearly anything before destroying it with his laser eyes. He presents himself as amiable, modest, and truthful; the ideal Boy Scout; a national treasure; and a God-fearing patriot. But even superheroes have their secrets. As the story went on, the researcher noticed that Homelander has several, if not all signs of narcissistic personality disorder. An arrogant narcissist and sadistic psychopath who has no concern for the safety of the people he claims to be protecting.

This research learned from others the representation of narcissistic personality disorder in the character of Amy Dunn, as portrayed in the 2014 psychological thriller film “Gone Girl” directed by David Fincher. The analysis focuses on examining the specific symptoms and behaviors associated with narcissistic personality disorder that are exhibited by Amy Dunn throughout the film, drawing upon the research conducted by Kurniasih in her doctoral dissertation on the same subject matter. Narcissistic personality disorder is a complex mental health condition characterized by a grandiose sense of self-importance, a preoccupation with fantasies of success and power, a lack of empathy for others, and a persistent need for admiration and validation (Kurniasih, 2022).

Mantika (2018) provides a comprehensive analysis of the psychological profile of the antagonist, Richard Franklin, in the popular novel by Nicholas Sparks. Through a close examination of the character’s behavior, emotions, and interactions within the narrative, the author delves into the intricate aspects of Antisocial Personality Disorder and how it is manifested in the character. The study offers valuable insights into the complexities of mental health, the nuances of literary characterization, and the importance of understanding the psychological underpinnings of fictional protagonists (Mantika, 2018).

The purpose of this research is to help the general public raise awareness about the disorder and its effects on both individuals and society. By depicting characters who suffer from NPD, we may potentially reduce stigma and create more compassion and understanding for those who suffer from this condition. For instance, novels like “The Great Gatsby” by F. Scott Fitzgerald and “Gone Girl” by David Fincher highlight the destructive effects of this behavior. Additionally, studying narcissistic personality disorder through literature may offer a unique and insightful viewpoint on this complex disorder.

Those are the reasons why Homelander is interesting to analyze. The researcher decided to study the narcissistic personality disorder Homelander using the NPD theory proposed by Caligor et al. (2015) and Vaknin (2015).

2 Method

The descriptive qualitative method is used to carry out this research because qualitative research offers weight to the data it gathers by establishing its objectivity. According to Palinkas (2014), "...the use of qualitative methods is that they are ideal for eliciting the perspectives of those being studied." Palinkas (2014) also added that "...qualitative methods serve to enhance the validity of data being collected because it enables the investigator to compare their perception of reality with the perception of those who are being studied."

This research is only focused on examining the data found in the series using the dialogue and/or transcript and then using the qualitative descriptive method to analyze the statements said in the series, hence making it the most suitable method for this research. The researcher also looks for information in documents, journals, theses, and website articles to assist in the analysis of the data. Some steps are imperative to collect the data, such as observing the series, followed by reading the transcript and subtitles to gain a deeper understanding of the narrative. In addition, the researcher made notes from the data source to get the data that matches the research questions. Last, identify the parts in the series where they show the signs of NPD that Homelander portrayed.

2.1 Data Source

The data of this research is Homelander from The Boys TV Series. He becomes the focus of this analysis since this research discusses his need for constant admiration, and how he always thinks he's special and needs to be treated differently. The Boys is a superhero-based TV series initiated by Eric Kripke for Amazon Prime Video that aired in 2019. To get the information needed for this analysis, the researcher reads the transcript and/or dialogue and watches the series. The series and transcript serve as the primary source of data for the research, providing all the information required.

2.2 Data Collection Technique

Some steps were taken in the data collection of the study as follows.

1. The researcher observed the series, followed by reading the transcript and subtitles to gain a deeper understanding of the narrative.
2. Select the dialogue/or transcripts that match with the theory
3. Making notes from the data source to get the data that will help with the research.
4. Identifies the parts in the series where they show the signs of NPD that Homelander portrayed.

2.3 Data Analysis

To analyze the data collected in this study, researchers use Caligor et al.’s (2015) theory to prove that Homelander has signs of NPD based on his dialogue and then determine the effect it has on Homelander’s life. This process is divided into the following steps: 1) Classifying the dialogues to match the signs of narcissistic personality disorder based on Caligor et al.’s (2015) theory, and 2) Determine the effects of NPD on Homelander’s life based on the signs proven. The researcher then concludes the analysis by revisiting the initial and final data to ensure accuracy and consistency.

3 Findings and Discussion

Below are the results of the study showing the categories of NPD (see Table 1). Out of 22 data, 13 excerpts are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. NPD Categories of Homelander from “The Boys” TV series

No.	Category	Epi- sode	Time	Dialogue
1.	Grandiose sense of self-im- portance	2 (two)	24:21 - 24:30	Homelander: Of course. But if something’s happened to him, then that’s a direct attack on the Seven, which is a direct attack on me.” Maeve: You’ve managed to make this about you in less than 20 seconds flat.
2.	Preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited suc- cess, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love	7 (seven)	45:06 - 45:24	Dr. Vogelbaum: I don’t want any- thing from you, John. I’m just an old man thinking about his mistakes. Homelander: I’m the world’s great- est superhero. Dr. Vogelbaum: You’re my greatest failure.
3.	Believes that he or she is “spe- cial” and unique and can only be understood by or should asso- ciate with, other special or high- status people (or institutions)	5 (five)	34:54 - 34:03	Homelander: Apparently, I got to wait for Congress to say it’s okay. (Audience booing) Homelander: Right? I say I answer to a higher law. Wasn’t I chosen to save you? (Audience cheers) Homelander: Is it not my God- given purpose to protect the United States of America? Audience: Homelander! Home- lander! Homelander!
4		7 (seven)	14:48 - 15:08	Homelander: We’re a different fucking breed. We shine with the golden light of providence, but you,

				you've been helping these fucking mud people to go against us.
				Starlight: No.
				Homelander: Shut your fucking mouth, young lady.
5.	Requires excessive admiration	2 (two)	14:16 - 14:20	Homelander: He was blackmailing you.
				Madelyn: I am the last person you need to save.
				Homelander: Yeah, but I did it for you
6.		8 (eight)	36:04 - 37:55	Homelander: Madelyn. Did it ever occur to you... that a Supe terrorist showing up exactly when we needed him to was... a pretty fucking incredible coincidence? It's almost like... someone planned it. Mm-hm
				Homelander: Me. Me. I made him.
				Madlyn: What do you mean you "made him"?
				Homelander: Well, I borrowed some Compound V, had A-Train run it all over the globe, and I supercharged some jihadis. Not to oversimplify it. I mean, it was actually very difficult and very messy, using adult subjects. There's a good reason that Vought doesn't do it. But... well, enough survived to call the operation a huge success. Huge.
				Homelander: And now... we have villains all over the globe... that only we can fight. In sequel after sequel... after sequel.
				Homelander: Well? Say something. (Madelyn starts kissing Homelander)
7.	Has a sense of entitlement	2 (two)	8:04 - 48:42	Homelander: Forget it. I'll find him myself. What's his last known position, please?
				Anika: Why don't I just call Ms. Stillwell? And I--
				Homelander: No.
				Homelander: No, no, no, no. You're talking to me.
				Anika: Well, I'm not sure I'm supposed to be talking to--
				Homelander: What's your name?
				Anika: Anika.
				Homelander: Anika. It's a beautiful name.

8. Is interper- 4 52:50 -
sonally exploita- (four) 54:30
tive

Homelander: Listen, Anika. I'm the Homelander. And I can do whatever the fuck I want. Okay?

Homelander: Now... Translucent's last known position. Please.

Reporter: Every passenger on board is presumed dead.

Homelander: They didn't have to die.

Reporter: We have Homelander and Queen Maeve on the scene. Do you have a comment?

Homelander: I said they didn't have to die. We arrived three minutes after the plane went down. And why?

Homelander: Because we're not in the chain of command. If NORAD called us before they scrambled jets, then we could've saved them. One hundred and twenty-three men, women, and children.

Homelander: Excuse me. (wept tears)

Homelander: But if they let us into the military, then this will never happen again. That is my solemn promise to you. Right, Maeve?

Homelander: Talk to your congressmen. Talk to them. They'll listen to the people. And together... Together, we will make sure that this never happens to our great nation ever again!

People: God bless you.

Homelander: God bless America.

People: We hear you, Homelander!

Homelander: And I hear you, brother! I hear you! And the world hears you! And very, very soon, my friend, whoever did this to us will hear from all of us!

People: Homelander! Homelander! Homelander!

9. Lacks empa- 4 31:26 -
thy (four) 31:46

Maeve: Take these two!

Homelander: No, no.

Maeve: Just these two! Please!

Homelander: No! What? So they can tell the world that we left the rest of them to fucking die

Maeve: Come on!

Homelander: No, Maeve. No-

(Some Passengers trying to get close to Homelander)

				Homelander: You! Stay back! (Pointing at them aggressively)
				Homelander: You stay the fuck back or I'll laser you, goddamn it! (Threaten all passengers at the same time)
				Homelander: Stay back!
				Homelander: Let's go! (He told Maeve)
10.	Is often envi- ous of others or believes that others are envi- ous of him or her	8 (eight)	15:01 - 15:05	Madelyn: You've grossed \$12.3 billion for us.
				Homelander: Right. So the pricks on 82 can take all the fucking credit? Empty fucking suits with Cornell de- grees? Come on.
11.			1:00:59 -1:01:19	Homelander: Did you ever really care about me?
				Madelyn: You mean everything to me.
				Homelander: No. No, no.
				Homelander: I mean everything to your job. You care more about that f*cking baby than you do about me.
				Madelyn: No. I love you. I love you. I love you. I swear I love you.
12.	Shows arro- gant, haughty behaviors and attitudes	3 (three)	25:11 - 25:30	Homelander: I've x-rayed Edgar, you know. He is this close to a coro- nary. He's got blood like engine oil. And Stillwell, with that mewling baby... It's ridiculous. They're just people. But they snap their fingers and we jump. Why? Why do we do that? (Maeve sighs)
				Maeve: Because they sign our cheques.
13.		7 (seven)	13:29 - 13:42	Starlight: I don't know what's go- ing on, but Hughie is not capable of an- ything close to this.
				Homelander: Well, that is true, ac- tually. That's very true.
				Homelander: He is just a man and, by the looks of it, not much of one.

3.1 Grandiose Sense of Self-Importance

Individuals with NPD may engage in behaviors such as boasting about their accomplishments, exaggerating their talents, and seeking frequent praise and recognition to maintain their grandiose self-image. They tend to prioritize their own needs, desires, and self-enhancement above all else. This grandiose sense of self-importance in NPD contributes to difficulties in maintaining healthy relationships, which can lead to inter-personal conflicts and a lack of genuine emotional connection with others.

According to the research conducted by Caligor et al. (2015), it has been proven that individuals with narcissistic personality disorder exhibit a notable tendency toward developing a grandiose sense of self-importance. This characteristic makes them think that they hold superior importance and possess greater abilities when compared to others who are present in the room. Maeve's response highlights Homelander's tendency to make everything about himself. She remarks that he has successfully redirected the focus of the problem onto himself in a short span of time. This exchange showcases Homelander's tendency to prioritize his own importance and to interpret all events through the lens of his self-interest.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, published by the American Psychiatric Association, is a comprehensive classification system that has become the authoritative reference for the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The latest edition, the DSM-5, released in 2013, represents a significant update to the previous version, the DSM-IV-TR, and has had a profound impact on the field of mental health care in the United States (Misra & Klibanski, 2014). One of the key aspects of the DSM-5 is its emphasis on the biomedical model of mental illness, which focuses on the physiological and neurological underpinnings of mental disorders (Jacob et al., 2013). This approach has been criticized by some for its exclusion of other perspectives, such as the social and psychological factors that contribute to mental health and illness. Nevertheless, the DSM-5 continues to be widely used by mental health professionals in the United States, and its influence extends beyond the boundaries of psychiatry and the United States. Despite its widespread use, the DSM-5 has not been without its critics. Some have argued that the manual's atheoretical approach and its emphasis on the biomedical model of mental illness oversimplifies the complex nature of human experience and neglects the social and cultural factors that shape mental health. Additionally, there are concerns that the DSM-5 may contribute to the overdiagnosis and overtreatment of mental disorders, particularly in primary care and community settings, where the nuances of psychiatric diagnosis may be less well understood (Jacob et al., 2013).

When they talk about the potential harm that has befallen someone, Homelander immediately frames it as a personal attack on himself. He reinforces his conviction that he is the central figure and that any threats or challenges to the group are ultimately directed at him by stating that any harm to any individual within The Seven is a direct attack on him. This perspective reflects his inflated ego and self-perception as the most crucial and influential member of the team.

Homelander quickly turns the conversation back to himself despite the important information Madelyn shares about her potential promotion, emphasizing his need for constant attention and validation of his own significance. His first worry is whether Madelyn will still be available to attend to his needs and be his "day-to-day" when she tells Homelander about the job offer and the potential of moving to the 82nd floor to be

near Mr. Edgar. His question furthers his belief that he is the center of Madelyn's universe and that her life should revolve around him by implying that he expects her to prioritize him over any other professional opportunities.

Homelander's grandiose sense of self-importance is deeply ingrained in their relationship, which is highlighted by Madelyn's response in which she promises to always be there for him. She readily complies with his demands because she is aware of his need for ongoing admiration and encouragement. Homelander's egotistical sense of self-importance is displayed by his immediate attention to himself and his desire to be the center of attention in the face of Madelyn's career-related news. He feels that everyone around him should be completely loyal to him and should have his best interests at heart.

3.2 Preoccupied with Fantasies of Unlimited Success, Power, Brilliance, Beauty, or Ideal Love

Individuals with narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) often have a preoccupation with unrealistic fantasies about themselves and their achievements. These fantasies serve to uphold an inflated self-image, boost self-esteem, and cope with feelings of insecurity and low self-worth. However, this preoccupation can lead to difficulties in forming genuine connections with others, as individuals focus on maintaining and fulfilling their idealized self-image rather than engaging in authentic, reciprocal relationships. This can lead to feelings of insecurity and low self-worth, hindering their ability to form genuine connections with others

As the world's greatest superhero, Homelander has been consistently celebrated and idolized, resulting in the reinforcement of his inflated self-image and a deep-rooted belief in his ingrained superiority. This grandiose sense of self-importance fuels his fantasies of possessing boundless power, as he views himself as surpassing the limitations of mere mortals.

Dr. Vogelbaum on the other hand, shattered Homelander's obsession on his fantasies with his remarks by telling him that he is his "greatest failure," Dr. Vogelbaum challenges Homelander's perception of invincibility and confronts him with the notion that even the world's most powerful superhero has limitations. These elements combined can form a volatile mix, pushing Homelander to relentlessly pursue the illusion of invincibility and to maintain the facade as the most powerful superhero.

3.3 Believes That He or She is Special and Unique, and Can Only be Understood or Should Associate with Other Special or High-Status People (or Institutions)

Individuals with narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) may believe they possess unique qualities, talents, or characteristics that set them apart from the average person. They view themselves as superior and deserving of special treatment and privileges,

leading to a desire to associate exclusively with individuals they perceive as equally special or high status. This association reflects a desire to maintain and enhance their self-image, as they may feel ordinary individuals lack the insight to comprehend their unique perspectives, experiences, or achievements. This belief can lead to isolation, difficulty in forming genuine relationships, and a lack of empathy. It can also hinder their ability to relate to the experiences and perspectives of those they consider less special or high-status.

Homelander's conviction is that he should only be associated with people or organizations of equivalently special or high status. This characteristic developed from the combination of several factors, including his narcissistic tendencies, his make-believe divine purpose, and the validation that he receives from his adoring audience. Homelander seizes the opportunity to further strengthen his sense of supremacy as the audience denounces the notion of Congress having a say on how he operates. He claims that he answers to a higher law, implying that his authority surpasses that of the conventional governing organizations. Homelander plays into a narrative of providence by establishing himself as someone who is chosen by God to help others, elevating his significance above ordinary people.

The enthusiastic applause and cheers from the audience further fuel Homelander's conviction in his exceptionalism. The devoting support from the ordinary people serves as external validation of his divine purpose and strengthens his belief that he is exceptionally gifted and deserving of adoration. As the people chant his name, Homelander interprets their collective response as validation that he is indeed unique and beyond the grasp of ordinary mortals. This further solidifies his belief that he should only associate with people or organizations of equivalent status since he perceives them as the only ones who are capable of genuinely comprehending and appreciating his exceptional qualities.

Homelander's belief in his own specialness and uniqueness, along with his conviction that he should only be understood by or affiliated with equivalently special or high-status people or organizations, this combination of factors can result in him having a desire for absolute control and supremacy. Homelander highlights a supposed extraordinary status that sets them apart from the rest of humanity when he claims that they are a "different breed" and possess a radiant divine light. This self-perceived superiority fuels his conviction that ordinary people, whom he derogatorily refers to as "mud people," are not capable of comprehending or appreciating his superior existence.

In addition, Homelander's dismissive response to Starlight's disagreements, in which he instructs her to "shut [her] fucking mouth," showcases his need for dominance and control. He reinforces the concept that only his perspective and voice should be heard and respected by silencing Starlight. This behavior strengthens his conviction that he is in a league of his own, where both Homelander's dismissive and patronizing behavior toward Mesmer in this dialogue reveals his pride in his exceptional and unique status as well as his preference for hanging around with high-status people. Homelander

sees himself as remarkable, he believes that only people who are similarly special merit his concern by starting off by claiming that he doesn't know Mesmer and has no interest in doing so, which represents his view that he is superior to and different from regular people.

3.4 Requires Excessive Admiration

At the core of excessive admiration lies a fundamental human need for admiration and validation. People often seek to bolster their own self-worth and identity by elevating others to an idealized status, a process known as self-enhancement (Hughes & Zaki, 2015). This can lead to a distorted perception of the admired individual, where their flaws and limitations are overlooked or minimized. Additionally, the desire to affiliate with and emulate those we admire can drive individuals to engage in excessive adoration, as a means of expanding their own sense of self and potential (Schindler et al., 2014).

Individuals with narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) often seek admiration to validate their self-image and seek external validation to counteract feelings of inadequacy or low self-worth. They may engage in behaviors such as boasting about accomplishments, exaggerating talents, and demanding constant attention and validation.

Seeking admiration to validate their self-image and seek external validation in order to alleviate the feelings of inadequacy or low self-worth often shown by individuals with narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). They may boast about their successes, exaggerate their talents, and demand constant attention and validation. They tend to expect special treatment, admiration, and praise from others, believing that they are entitled to it. If they do not receive the level of admiration they believe they deserve, they may experience frustration or dismissiveness. They may seek relationships or social situations that provide them with constant attention and admiration, leading to a synthetic and transactional approach to interpersonal interactions.

When Madelyn denies the notion that she needs saving, Homelander answers by saying that he acted in her best interest. This dialogue demonstrates his underlying need for adoration and approval, as he constantly seeks validation from others for his actions, particularly those he perceives to be substantial or noteworthy.

Another example, Homelander's responses reveal a desire to be viewed as the hero, the savior, and the one with the power to protect and rescue people. He seeks not only recognition but also the adulation and gratitude that accompany such actions by presenting himself as the one who goes above and beyond for his people. The more he is admired, the more he believes himself as powerful, extraordinary, and deserving of unconditional and wholehearted devotion. Homelander seeks recognition and appreciation for his actions toward Madelyn when he claims that he was the one who saved the Flight 37 incident and turned it into a win for their shared benefit. He seeks affirmation

for his perceived heroism and exceptional qualities by highlighting his role in preserving their reputation and securing a positive outcome for both of them.

Homelander's need for excessive and continuous admiration developed from his fragile ego and the assumption that his worth is strongly linked to the amount of praise and admiration he receives on a daily basis. The emphasis he places on his accomplishments and anticipation of praise shows his substantial need for constant adoration and validation from others, fueling his sense of self-importance and further reinforcing his conviction in his exceptional status.

4 Conclusion

Homelander has proven to have all nine signs of narcissistic personality disorder and is heavily influenced by it. NPD presents itself through a variety of different behavioral patterns. This condition influences his interactions, relationships, and self-identity, resulting in manipulative tendencies, a lack of empathy, and an insatiable need for adulation. His inflated sense of self-importance, fixation with delusions of success, uniqueness, and entitlement to preferential treatment all add to his complicated psychological state. Homelander's behaviors demonstrate his arrogance, exploitation of others, and unwillingness to connect with their feelings and needs on a constant basis. NPD's widespread effects are visible in his pursuit of power, control, and validation, indicating the substantial influence this personality disorder has on shaping his behaviors and views.

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