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Mass Murder Case

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Summary of case

This summary will discuss a mass murder case ² at the University of Texas, Austin, in 1966. The mass shooting was done by an ex-marine and a student known as Charles Whitman. He had been suffering from irrational thoughts, which made him commit countless murder crimes. He first killed his mother and wife because he did not want them to suffer from embarrassment after committing suicide. He even wrote a suicidal note pointing out why he wanted to commit suicide and why he killed his mother and wife. However, in the note, he did not mention his motives for the mass shooting that was to happen.

At around 11.30 am, he headed to the University of Texas clock tower, which was on the 28th floor, and on his way, he injured the receptionists and other two individuals and killed two more people while climbing his steps to the clock tower. When he reached the deck, spread his guns across the deck, and started shooting at the mall below. He ended up shooting a pregnant student in the abdomen that instantly killed the unborn child, shot the pregnant girl's boyfriend, and then began raining bullets on random individuals who were at the mall. He then pointed his guns to Guadalupe Streets toward the operating businesses and started shooting passers-by and anyone in that street. He managed to kill 14 individuals that day, including the unborn baby and excluding his mother and wife. He also injured 31 individuals, one of who died 30 years later due to complication from his shooting wounds. However, Whitman was shot dead by the police 90 minutes later after his mass shooting spree (Wallnfeldt, 2020).

It turns out that Whitman had a tumor in his brain that made him unable to control his actions and emotions, hence the mass murders he committed. Also, this mass murder case helped the police to come up with contingency plans that would help them manage such a situation better when it happens again (Seebock, 2018).

Analysis of Charles Whitman Personality

Charles Whitman was a male individual born in the year 1941 in Florida. Despite the events and conditions that happened during 1966 which changed personality that he was recognized with, Charles was a determined person who could work towards his dreams. Furthermore, he was also a promoter and caring individual who was worried about the state of the country. Being involved in the navy indicated that he was determined to make America a great place by protecting the country as well as its people. According to Wallenfeldt (2020), Charles joined the military even when his father was against it, however, his decisions were arrived at because he needed to move away from his violent father.

Moreover, Charles had a utopian personality because he utilized a lot of his time to recognize parts of a utopian dream. Catley (2019), argues that being in utopia is a flawless world where there are no challenges such as illnesses, disparity, war and discernment. The same source also stated that having a utopia personality makes an individual feel they are in a safe environment. Hence, Charles utilized a lot of money, energy and resources in making his life great by joining the military and going to school. Furthermore, Charles's extensive view of the world made him have a wide perception of life that resulted in him being shy to face the reality.

Whitman has an impractical personality, however, his love is more objective as he focuses on his dreams. Wallenfeldt (2020), stated that Charles despite failing in his course of engineering, he went back to study architecture, this indicated how determined he was in following his career. Nevertheless, when Charles was not in agreement with real life, he could be temperamental and reserved. Similarly, the characters accompanying him were to be indeterminate, unappreciative and nervous hence ending up pushing his blames on other individuals.

The problem of being disappointed by his true nature made him miserable and unable to cope with the realities of life. Charles had limitations and was unable to deal with them to improve himself as well as that of others. While many people work towards enhancing their achievement more needs to be done based on Charles's personality. Since the mass shooting happened in Texas Tower in 1966, individuals have learned that it is essential to take the natural shortcomings in their life as well as their environments to allows them enjoy their life to completion. Therefore, Charles is required to accept his situation and allow the physical properties and relationship to go since holding them strongly makes him experience pain.

Moreover, Charles was experiencing psychological instability, severe headaches and strong fits of anger. Although Whitman tried to consult the school psychologist and mental specialist concerning his mental wellness, the mental expert recommended that Charles attend the next session which was to happen after one week. Gunderson et al. (2018), argued that personality disorder is a procedure of feelings, opinions and behaviors that a person may have exhibited for along time. Thus, Charles has been in the condition for several years because he joined the marine in 1959 and returned in 1962 where Charles joined the university. However, due to poor performance in school, Charles joined in marine again and was discharged respectably resulting in joining the school again but on a different course.

Consequently, Charles Whitman has a borderline personality disorder. According to Gunderson et al. (2018), a borderline personality disorder is a mental illness that affects the way people reason and feel about themselves and others hence leading to difficulties operating in their daily activities. The personality disorder comprises challenges handling emotions and behavior, self-perception problems and a design of unbalanced association. Despite Whitman being defined by people who knew him as ordinary and intelligent and no one could suppose that

he could have done that. However, based on the note Whitman wrote, he did not realize who he was anymore because he felt like a victim of several uncommon and ridiculous thoughts. This indicated that Charles had a variation in his mind probably due to the brain tumor that was developing and resulted in pain.

Having borderline personality disorder made Charles have a powerful fear of rejection or uncertainty making him have a challenge when alone. Furthermore, in such cases, there is increased unsuitable anger, impetuosity and regular mood swings that may make people move away regardless of how much an individual needs to have a loving and permanent relationship. Charles's condition did not start when he was young, as he realized he was not normal hence requiring the brain to be tested and evaluated after his death for any physical mental problem. Borderline personality disorder usually occurs at the early stages of adulthood so it happened to Whitman. Besides, Charles exhibited several symptoms of borderline personality disorder including, frequent variations in self-identity and self-perception such as changes in the individual's objectives as well as viewing oneself as not existing or as a bad person (Catley, 2019). Another symptom portrayed is having suicidal behaviors which are a result of fear of denial, feeling of bareness and unsuitable strong anger.

How Aggression, Attachment and Empathy Factor Relate to Personality

An Individual's personality can lead to the rise of several behaviors which may cause harm to other people who do not deserve it. However, there are several factors such as aggression, attachment and empathy which may influence an individual's personality. While majority of the individuals who have committed murder are associated with traumatic experiences during childhood, Whitman's case is not an exception, because he was raised in a family full of violence as his father used to be aggressive. For that reason, individuals raised in an environment that are

full of suffering make them traumatic and hence will explode to them in future. Traumatic activities may appear in different ways for instance through practices that engage a person in neglect and violence. Mancke et al. (2015), emphasized that parental abandonment and abuse can be a huge forecaster in future aggression. In addition, the reason for Whitman to join the marine was to escape the increased violence from his father and therefore, aggression from the family can make children have unsuitable behaviors.

Mancke et al. (2015), defined aggression as being angry or having a violent behavior. However, the authors also stated that individuals with aggressive behavior do not necessarily react with violence, because it may lead to a bodily or vocal attack that may be protective or impulsive. Since Charles was aggressive it resulted in experiencing mental health problems. Again, other health effects related to aggression are posttraumatic stress and bipolar which might result in violent actions due to aggressive judgments. As Charles came from the marines and realized the changes in his thinking and oneself, indicated that he passed through neglect and traumatic experience in childhood that results in aggressiveness and violence. Aggression factor may also contribute to Charles's personality because of the increased depression and anxiety coming from the violent relationship he was subjected to. Borderline personality is also associated with aggression although the mental disorder is not linked with violent behaviors, a failure in handling skills may result in antisocial personality.

Attachment factor plays a critical role in an individual's personality. Schore (2018), argued that uncertain attachments outlines and a character temperament that leads to undesirable distress and impulsivity are related to borderline personality disorders. Moreover, focusing on attachment theory developed by John Bowlby stated that the theory is responsible for studying the relationship among individuals especially parents and children as well as those in lasting

relationships (Schore, 2018). Bowlby was focusing on how to recognize the parting anxiety and distress that kids experience when they part with their parents. Therefore, the attachment factor is an evolutionary progression that lasts throughout life.

Uncertain attachment patterns convey more risks for maladaptive personality characteristics that are fundamental to borderline personality disorder. For example, when a kid is neglected at that early age by their primary caregivers, it will leave a profound wound that will be hard for them to resolve, this will lead to spartan lasting consequences in children's lives as well as brain operation. This is because the secure attachment will not be developed which makes the child feel safe within their environment. Due to increased abuse from his father, Whitman did not develop a safe attachment with him hence developing the personality at his later age. It was noted that Charles had also turned out to be like his father in abusing his wife (Wallenfeldt, 2020). Additionally, to raise an emotionally healthy kid, it is important to provide them with a secure attachment which includes a feeling of safety in their ecosystem, make them realize they are seen based on their personality, calmed when in distress and feel secure.

Empathy factor is critical in Charles's personality because he was always open about the feelings felt. According to Pohling et al. (2016), empathy is the capacity for another individual to recognize how another person feels and perceives things. Although understanding what other people feel and view things is hard, it plays a critical role in ensuring the well-being of a person. Thus, as Charles Whitman started experiencing mental issues when the mother left his father in 1966, Charles informed the school psychiatrist concerning his condition of having weird thoughts of going up to the tower with a rifle and shooting people. Regrettably, the psychiatrist did not take strict measures on the red flag.

State versus Trait Factors

Trait and state factor plays a critical role in defining the personality or behaviors of a person. However, individuals always get confused when defining the behaviors of other individuals because they may contradict between trait and state of that person. According to Zuckerman (2015), a trait is regarded as something that is part of the person and thus considered as a lasting characteristic of the person. Therefore, trait factors may be defined by following individuals' behaviors, actions or feelings. For instance, since Charles has been considered as an individual experiencing a utopia personality, he will always focus on the thoughts of treating the world as a better place with no inequalities. Moreover, a trait is observed as a characteristic and quality of the person.

On the other hand, state factor is different because it is considered as a momentary condition that individuals are undergoing for a limited timeframe. Hence, individuals will change from this condition after some time and exhibit another situation. For example, the mental problem exhibited by Charles was varying and thus sometimes he would experience suicidal thoughts while other times he is normal and realizes that he is not himself. This was fascinating because it is difficult to differentiate between the two. After all, personality states and traits are differentiated by time consistency. Moreover, recognizing the momentum of trait and state factors may occur concurrently because a state may result in the appearance of a trait from an individual. For example, when individuals are in a state where they feel they are hungry, it will result in the trait of anxiety being portrayed.

Recommendations for the Interview

The interview process is critical in understanding the reasons for the murder as well as getting answers to vital questions. Therefore, this process begins with having the right interviewers to perform the task. A good interviewer will ensure the interviewee is assessed

correctly, fairly and systematically. However, having a wrong interviewer will result in obtaining misdirected feedback, present a negative experience to the interviewee and getting unclear decisions. To obtain the best interviewer several essential qualities will be looked at including knowledge of handling the interview process, undergo training and can control their emotions and anger while listening attentively. Similarly, the environment of the interview is crucial in having a productive interview because the more the offender feels comfortable and safe the more effective the interview will be. Thus, the interview environment will be a place where the interviewee is comfortable and safe. Furthermore, there will be fewer participants to ensure the interviewee is free in opening up and not feeling overwhelmed.

Managing the interviewer's response is a significant part of guaranteeing all the information is obtained. After beginning the interview, the interviewer should follow the question guide and pay attention to what the interviewee is saying without interfering with what is being said until completion. Staying silent while the interviewee is speaking is the best option rather than responding by "yes" or "mmm-hmmm" however, the interviewer should respond by using nonverbal cues such as nodding head to indicate they are listening (Anzaldúa, 2020). Also, the interviewer will have to be patient as it takes time for the interviewee to say their stories. Besides, while asking the interview questions, interviewers should avoid questions that can be answered by yes or no. Instead, they should use questions that start with when, how or tell me, to ensure they provide detailed answers and ask them if they have anything to add as the last word of the interview.

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