

“Purgatory” Reaction Paper

Larissa Weinert

Mental Health Counseling Program, Alliance University

GCN 617: NOS Crisis Intervention Strategies For Trauma And Abuse

Dr. George Ramos

March 10, 2023

I would describe the main male character's disposition and attitude as abusive, controlling, manipulative, and aggressive. In contrast, I would describe the female main character's disposition and attitude as dependent, fearful, and submissive.

I saw many signs of emotional and physical abuse. At the beginning of the short film, the male character seems to use silence to control the female's behavior until she expresses a worry about recurrent unexplained bleeding in her genital area and the desire to seek medical help. His response was another sign of emotional abuse, as he ridiculed her worry and stated she would waste her time and "look like an idiot" if she sought help. He then proceeds into further emotional abuse by questioning the female's integrity and motives to dress nicely, gaslighting her into believing she did something wrong. Further signs of emotional abuse were his successful attempts to isolate his partner from her family, trying to manipulate her and convince her that her family is the problem and she is "better off" now." When his partner insists on seeing her family, he reacts aggressively and yells at her, which is another sign of emotional abuse and causes mental distress. Signs of physical abuse were displayed by the female's recurrent unexplained bleeding and pain due to the male character overmedicating his partner every night without her knowledge or consent to having anal sex with her as she was unconscious.

Among the signs of abuse, the cycle of violence (Jackson-Cherry & Erford, 2018) can be seen in the short film. The tension-building phase is displayed by the female's behavior as she often times was compliant and nurturing towards the abuser to keep his anger from escalating. The second phase, the acute battering incident, is seen when the male character reacts in rage to an external stressor - the female trying to make arrangements to see her family. He yells at her, hits the table, and throws food all over. Lastly, the honeymoon phase starts when the abuser returns after raging and apologizes for his reaction in a seemingly loving and caring way.

The tactic of isolation plays a part in abuse within the couple as the female character is kept dependent on her partner and away from receiving help from others, becoming more vulnerable to mistreatment and abuse.

I see the dynamic of “Power and Control” play out in this film precisely as Jo, K. (2012) explains: “The abuser overtly attempts to control and assert their perceived power entitlement by any means necessary (physical, mental and emotional abuse are *tools* to accomplish their goal).” Similarly, the female character fits Jo K’s description of covert power and control, also known as co-dependence, whenever she tries to challenge her partner’s commands, attempting to exercise control over the situation and make a decision that ultimately fails.

Jantz, 2018 explains that a co-dependent person remains in an abusive relationship to feel valued, even when based on inappropriate or harmful behavior. Their vision is so blurred that it is hard to simply leave the relationship and abusive partner. The author explains that emotional abuse makes the victim replace their own control over themselves with the abuser’s control. Furthermore, the victim - in this case, the female character, no longer trusts themselves and allows the abuser undue influence over their thoughts and actions, controlling their self and world views.

If I were the female character’s therapist, I would first assess the client’s awareness of the situation and desire or lack thereof to leave the relationship, along with their reasons. I would intervene by using psychoeducation to teach the client about different types of abuse and their signs and work towards empowering her to rebuild her self-trust and view herself as valuable apart from their partner. I would assist the client in processing the trauma and consequences of that relationship, and if they decide they want to leave and it is safe to do so, I would provide them with helpful resources.

References

Jackson-Cherry, L.R., & Erford, B. T. (2018). *Crisis assessment, intervention, and prevention*. (3rd ed.). Pearson.

Jantz, G. L. (2018, October 30). *Codependency and emotional abuse*. Psychology Today.
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hope-relationships/201810/codependency-and-emotional-abuse>

Jo, K. (2012, April 16). *The Power-Control Dynamic and Abusive Anger*, HealthyPlace.
<https://www.healthyplace.com/blogs/verbalabuseinrelationships/2012/04/power-control-dynamic-abusive-anger>