

Phenomenological Studies: Adolescent Toxic Relationships

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to find out the picture of toxic relationships experienced by adolescents dating. This type of research is a type of qualitative research with phenomenological methods. The data collection methods used are interviews and observations. The data collection technique used is the purposive sampling technique. Meanwhile, the data analysis techniques used consist of preparing data, reading the entire data, coding data, applying the results of data coding into themes to be analyzed, presenting themes in the form of narratives, and interpreting data. The results showed that the three subjects, namely az, GN, and RA subjects, experienced toxic relationships while in a courtship relationship. This is influenced by factors from within each of them when deciding to start a relationship. The toxic relationships they have experienced have caused a lot of harm to themselves both in terms of physical, mental, and academic. This makes the three subjects more careful if they want to get to know new people and assume that a toxic relationship can never be repaired.

Keywords: Adolescence, Courtship, Toxic Relationship.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Interaction and communication are closely related to humans as social beings. Existing interactions and communications can be carried out directly or indirectly through the use of various types of media. Humans can connect and always be in touch through engagement and communication. Children, especially adolescents will distinguish interpersonal and intrapersonal communication in the context of peers. According to data from the Data and Information Center of the Ministry of Health (INFODATIN) in 2019, depressive disorders have been classified by age since adolescence (15-24 years) with a percentage of 6.2%, where depression is caused by internal conflicts (family), bullying of feelings of disappointment, and others so that it will affect adolescents in developing relationships with their environment and engaging in toxic relationships (Preptiningsih & Putra, 2021).

Building a harmonious relationship with someone requires great participation and sympathy between the two parties. It is normal and normal for a relationship to conflict or differ in something. However, conditions like this will cause one of them to feel depressed, threatened, and then forced. Conditions like this can be an indication of a toxic relationship or what is often called a toxic relationship. Relationships where one party feels unsupported, underestimated, attacked, or demeaned are often known as toxic relationships. A form of negative behavior that can affect a person's mental health can be physical, psychological, or emotional aggression.

Toxic relationships can be experienced between spouses, friends, colleagues, and even family members. Relationships like this are very vulnerable to making the sufferer unproductive, the occurrence of mental disorders that can trigger an emotional occurrence that leads to violence (Julianto *et al.*, 2020). This unhealthy form of relationship is indeed quite difficult for us to avoid. In this era of disruption, as a result

of the increasing demands in society, it is not uncommon to experience this toxic relationship. Many make toxic relationships as an outlet for emotions that are not channeled properly or the existence of psychic trauma that encourages a person to commit acts of retaliation (Nihaya *et al.*, 2022). An example that often occurs is for example in a courtship relationship, where there is a process of interaction between two individuals who are in the phase of finding the suitability of fellow individuals with the aim of building each other and supporting each other to create a sense of security, but it is possible that a conflict will arise.

A relationship must have a time when the couple faced a conflict. A conflict can occur due to several problems faced by the couple, for example, there are differences of opinion about something, jealousy of the partner and personality differences. The appearance of continuous conflicts can lead to the appearance of violence committed by one of the parties to his partner (Wishesa & Suprapti, 2014).

Violence in dating is an example of a toxic relationship that is included in personal violence. There are 3 levels of violence in dating, the first is verbal and emotional abuse which is the most common type of relationship violence. At first, the victim would not believe that he had been the victim of an assault because there was no physical evidence. The second is sexual violence of a physically violent nature, but the situation of the perpetrator does not seem focused on dominating the victim, despite all the persuasions, demands of love, and promises. Finally, it is physical violence in the form of punches, slaps, kicks, and encouragement. Generally, people with a history of violence in the family, physical conflicts, and torture are perpetrators and victims of violence in dating (Astari & Santosa, 2019). Toxic relationships can actually be avoided by showing how to develop positive interactions and communication. Interpersonal contact such as joking correctly, understanding each other, and opening pleasant conversations and greetings can reduce the trigger elements for the emergence of toxic relationships (Praptiningsih & Putra, 2021).

This study selected adolescents as behavioral subjects in toxic relationships on the grounds that adolescents could control a relationship that would hurt or cause damage, both physically and psychologically. This is in line with a study conducted by Praptiningsih and Putra (2021) entitled "Toxic Relationships in Interpersonal Communication among Adolescents" which found that unhealthy forms of relationships occur due to demands by the surrounding community. Fernando *et al.* (2021) say that excessive jealousy is sometimes shown by cursing, yelling, hitting, and slapping. However, since most teenagers, in this case, fall into the category of children and believe that their boyfriend is more than anything else, then the teenager is willing to be treated or do anything for the sake of the figure of his girlfriend, even if he has been harmed in this way. Excessive jealousy, shouting, cursing, punching, slapping, and all other forms of violence are not forms of affection, but rather forms of violence.

Looking at the conditions above, researchers felt the need to conduct interviews to find out more about the conditions experienced by adolescents who experience toxic relationships. Based on the results of an interview on March 18, 2022 through WhatsApp messaging media, it was found that the subject had experienced a toxic relationship for 8 months when he was 14 years old. Initially, the relationship between the subject and his partner was a healthy relationship, but over time the subject couple began to show toxic relationship behaviors in the form of overprotective, excessive jealousy to playing victims. The behavior of the playing victim carried out by the partner of the subject causes the subject to feel down and not confident even the subject to the point of falling ill. Not only that, but the subject couple also likes to regulate the needs of the subject until finally the subject can no longer stand it and chooses to end the relationship for the sake of the subject's own psychological and physical health.

Toxic relationships have a bad impact on anyone who experiences it. This condition causes anyone who experiences a toxic relationship will make their psychological health to decrease. In line with research that has been carried out by Nihaya *et al.* (2022) which shows that toxic relationships are unhealthy relationships that trigger sadness and tension and can trigger new dilemmas and diseases. These unhealthy relationships can cause feelings of insecurity, feelings of jealousy, feelings of wanting to win by yourself, like to lie, demeaning partners, and uttering less positive comments which are the characteristics of toxic relationships (Effendy, 2021).

Based on previous studies on toxic relationships, it is known to have differences with the research that researchers will conduct. The research conducted by Julianto *et al.* (2020) uses quantitative methods, while the research that researchers want to do uses qualitative methods. The difference also lies in the subject of the study where the subjects in this study have characteristics, namely adolescents who experience toxic relationships in dating. Meanwhile, the research conducted by Praptiningsih and Putra (2021) has something in common, namely using qualitative methods. However, the difference lies in the subject of the study where the subjects in this study have characteristics, namely adolescents who experience toxic relationships in dating.

Based on the description above, it is known that toxic relationships have an impact on their victims. Toxic relationships always make their victims feel worthless, feel unsupported or often demeaned and go away when doing anything. Therefore, researchers are interested in researching further regarding "Phenomenological Studies: Adolescent Toxic Relationships".

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a qualitative study with theme analysis. The selection of qualitative methods in this study was because the researcher wanted to see a picture of the phenomenon of toxic relationships that occurred among adolescents. Researchers also want to see what impacts arise in adolescents when experiencing toxic relationships.

A. Types of Research

The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach with the type of phenomenological method. The data collection technique carried out is triangulation (combined), and inductive data analysis and the results of the research focus more on meaning than generalization. This study focuses on finding out the picture of adolescent individuals who experience toxic relationships.

B. Research Subjects

The participants involved in this study were 3 people. The criteria for the selected participants were: adolescents aged 15-20 years who had experienced toxic relationships so that the results of the study could represent how the phenomenon of toxic relationships in adolescents illustrates. Researchers used purposive sampling participant selection techniques and researchers used informed consent to obtain consent from participants involved in the study.

C. Data Collection Methods

The data collection methods used by researchers are interview and observation methods. Researchers conducted in-depth interviews to obtain information, as well as made observations by taking notes to find out the toxic relationship experiences that participant had experienced during and after the interview process. Researchers took data from adolescents who had experienced toxic relationships. Researchers will contact participants who meet the criteria and conduct interviews through the Zoom meeting application, while observations will be carried out in the Zoom meeting application by looking at what behavior's participants cause during the interview process. In the interview process, researchers conducted in depth interviews to be able to find out thoroughly the toxic relationship that occurred in participants. These in-depth questions allow participants to talk about their toxic relationship experiences during dating relationships and researchers can easily group participants' answers based on questions.

D. Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis used in this study was obtained from various sources using varied data collection techniques and was carried out in relation to obtain complete data. Before the researcher goes directly to the field, it is necessary to analyze the data first. This research is focused on existing conditions in the community and in data collection.

III. RESEARCH RESULTS

Three subjects who had experienced toxic relationships in dating relationships agreed to participate in this study. One subject is 15 years old in high school, one subject is 18 years old is studying at one of the state universities in the Yogyakarta area, and one subject is 19 years old is studying at one of the private universities in the Yogyakarta area.

This study can provide an overview of the phenomenon of toxic relationships in adolescents dating considering that the participants involved have experienced toxic relationships. All three subjects were teenagers who were victims of toxic relationships in the dating relationship they lived. The analysis of this study succeeded in revealing the picture of toxic relationships that occur in adolescents dating, namely; experience, self-awareness, and fighting power. The following is an explanation of each dominant condition in participants found in the interview results.

A. Factors Causing Subjects to Experience Toxic Relationships

It started from a virtual acquaintance because it belonged to a scholarship community that eventually made the subject start communication more intensely. The subjects also find it unique because of their same date of birth as well as the similarity of some of their traits. From the communication carried out, the subject feels comfortable until finally deciding to start a relationship on the basis of his own accord without encouragement from others. Since undergoing the relationship, the subject never thought that he would experience a toxic relationship which eventually made the subject quite destructed by the existence of the relationship.

"If you want to know him yourself, you can say you know it virtually, brother. I knew him because I joined the scholarship held by ruangguru. We were in different schools but still in the same batch and started to get to know him because he initially discussed assignments and entered the same task group while participating in this scholarship and finally began to communicate intensely in private."

The communication sometimes discusses random things or talks about lessons that we both don't understand. Then, when I first got to know it, I also felt unique because the dates of birth of the two of us were the same even though the month and year were different, and then I also felt that the nature of the two of us had similarities." (W1, AZ, 22-04-2022, B37-54)

B. Experience

The subject said that when the subject experienced a toxic relationship, the ex-did things that the subject did not like, such as tapping the subject's cell phone which caused the subject to feel that they did not have privacy. Subjects are also prohibited from making friends with both men and women. The subject also admits that this is the second time the subject has been in a courtship relationship so that the subject has not understood much about the correct way of dating. This can be seen through the subject statement as follows:

"Emm, a lot of it. For example, like, my cellphone is tapped, so he can know what my activities are, he can mirror screens that I can see what I just open on my cellphone, he can see from my camera again what I'm doing, he can hear my voice again chatting with anyone, anyway, it's like that. So, my cellphone is like it's rooted, so he can know. I also can't be friends with the opposite sex like that, even with the same sex, like a woman likes to be banned, like what to go for is not important to stay at home. So, it's like yaaa, possessiveness is like that." (W1, RA, 13-04-2022, B99-114)

"Honestly, after getting out of that already sick relationship, I feel better now but there's a lot of trauma and trust issues that I feel like now like now I really can't or like I don't dare to be in a relationship anymore or just PDKT with men, I'm too scared. Even though the incident happened already 2 years ago. Don't worry anymore, enter into a relationship that is so even though it is still a pity or whatever it seems that there is no tolerance for the same thing called a toxic relationship. Because if you have come in and imagine it, there are many disadvantages, such as from physical, mental, health to mental health, you are also made sick, so don't mess around." (W1, GN, 2022-04-30, B283-299)

C. Self-Awareness

The subject has the awareness that he is in a toxic relationship because he is made aware of by the subject's friends. The subject also realized it was because of his ex who cheated on him repeatedly. This can be seen through the subject statement as follows:

"Emm, from a friend anyway. Like the story to the friend "Ehh, how come he is not here, the cellphone cave is tapped" so-so, like the initial response was not realized that it was toxic, just listening to the response of friends like he felt it was strange so it was like realizing "Th, what's wrong with yaa", "Oiyaa how come it's like this", "Other people are dating this too not yes". Like to think to myself "I don't know, my other friends are dating like this". So, starting to open up slowly turned out to be toxic and also emmm he was cheating on him. So, when I found out he was cheating on me, I was still like sorry, still accepting him, like thinking he was going to change like that with me giving me that. But it's not, I'm the one who seems too stupid, I'm still sorry for him to continue, I'm still accepting him, that's it." (W1, RA, 13-04-2022, B118-138)

"I personally started to realize that this relationship was not healthy from a friend, when I confided in it. This friend of mine gave me a suggestion to end this relationship so that it doesn't make me stressed out which can make my school grades decline and my daily life is not productive because I like to overthinking the words that have been thrown by my ex-girlfriend." (W1, AZ, 22-04-2022, B127-136)

D. Fighting Power

The subject recounted that he would continue to be with the opposite sex by forgiving all the wrongs that the opposite sex committed. The subject is also reluctant to end his relationship because it has been going on for a long time and the subject believes that the opposite sex will change for the subject's self. The subject seeks to understand all the deeds of the opposite sex and the subject also chooses to be silent every time the opposite sex does unwanted things in order to avoid the word breakup. This can be seen through the subject statement as follows:

"In the past, yes, I thought about it, emm. Because I think, what do you think, I think it's going to be with him all the time, it's like never letting go. So, yes, I just followed what he wanted, what he told him to do, what he forbade. So, it's like there's no intention to change, it's more about just talking to him but after breaking up, so it's more learning, what you've been doing, that's it." (W1, RA, 13-04-2022, B142-152)

"Honestly, at that time I didn't know why I was such a stupid person hahahaha. It's like my logic is to close it, so I don't know what to do so that it can make me better, ehehehe." (W1, GN, 30-04-2022, B274-279)

E. Impact of Experiencing Toxic Relationships for Subjects

The subject's daily life becomes disturbed, ranging from the focus of the subject to the physical and mental condition of the subject. The subject becomes often daydreams, often overthinking and his appetite also decreases. Initially, the subject feels tired of the relationship but does not want to end the relationship until finally, the subject decides to end the relationship because he feels that the relationship is mentally destructive to the subject. The subject's partner is often possessive, easily suspicious and likes to bring up past issues that make the subject feel depressed. The subject also gives the understanding that a toxic relationship will be difficult to repair again unless the toxic perpetrator improves his attitude.

The subject recounts the beginning of the subject's relationship was due to getting to know each other through a scholarship program. The subject also recounted what he felt during the relationship until it ended up being a toxic relationship. The subject says that the impact felt when experiencing a toxic relationship is to interfere with the subject's daily life so that the subject becomes less focused and decreases in himself. In addition, the subject explains that his desire to start such a relationship is indeed his own desire. This can be seen through the subject's statement as follows:

"Possessive behavior, easy to be suspicious, likes to bring up problems that have already passed by. Anyway, all that behavior that I don't like about him. He also sometimes overthinks me and disturbed my daily life. I didn't focus even on school matters like grades so it also decreased because I was overthinking his words." (W1, AZ, 22-04-2022, B180-188)

This research raises the title of Phenomenological Studies: Toxic Relationships of Adolescents in adolescents who are dating. It explains what are the things that are related to and influence teenagers to date. It can be known that there is a relationship between the impact of starting a relationship and the emergence of a toxic relationship. The results of the researcher's interview with the three subjects, namely the AZ subject, the GN subject, and the RA subject. Namely the background of adolescents experiencing toxic relationships, and in Fig. 1, namely the picture of toxic relationships in adolescents who are dating.

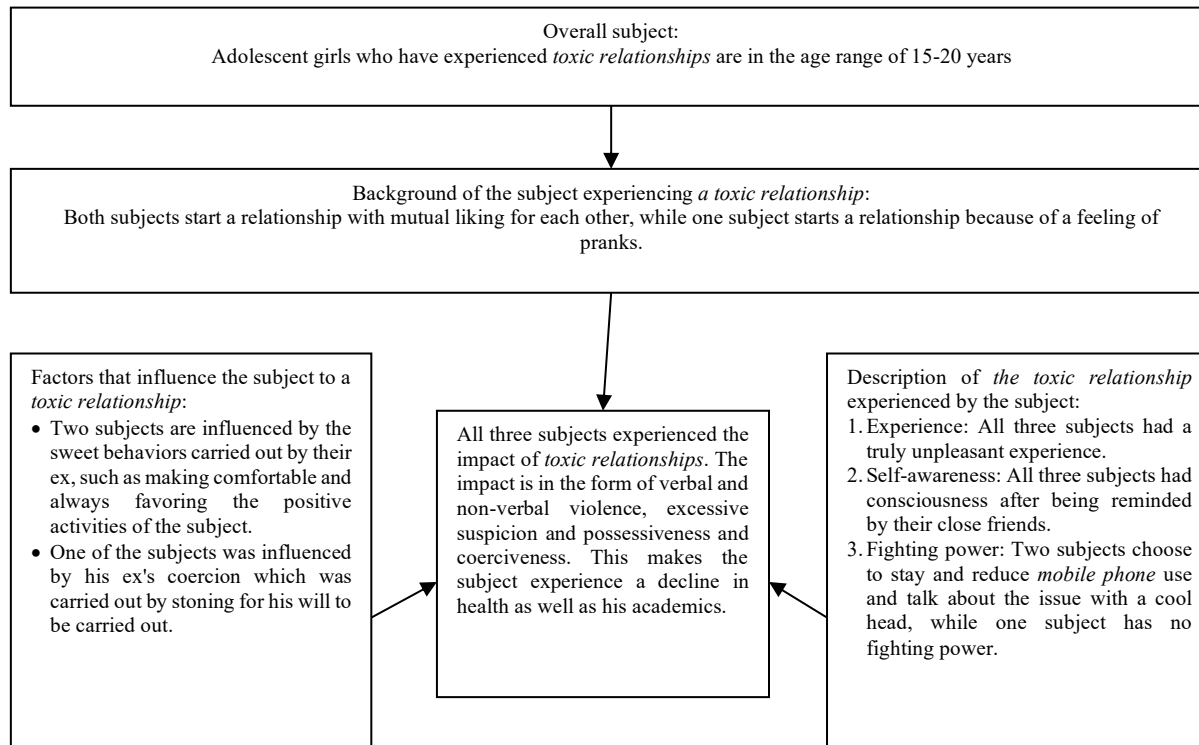


Fig. 1. Dynamics of the Toxic Relationship Phenomenon in Adolescents Who Are Dating.

IV. DISCUSSION

This study discusses the phenomenon of toxic relationships among adolescents. The subjects in this study were three adolescents who had experienced toxic relationships. According to Setijaningsih *et al.*, (2019) in adolescence, there is usually a sense of wanting to have or have a romantic relationship with the opposite

sex. Due to the rise of teenagers who decide to date at an age whose emotional condition is not stable, it causes the phenomenon of toxic relationships among teenagers.

All three subjects have reasons when deciding to start a courtship relationship. One of the subjects decides to start a relationship out of his own desires and feels that there is a similarity of nature between the subject and his partner so that a feeling of mutual liking arises between the subject and his partner. Just like the other two subjects who also decided to start a relationship because of their own desires and felt that the effort made by their partner was so great that finally, the subject began to like his partner. This is in line with the opinion of Anitsnaini (2020) who stated that the feeling of love is the result of the maturity factor of gonotrophic hormone produced by the hypothalamic gland, namely the emergence of feelings of mutual attraction between adolescent boys and girls which are generally appreciated by courtship relationships.

Unlike one of the subjects who stated that the reason for starting a relationship was on a whim to accept the invitation to date, it was also basically based on the sense of comfort and security carried out by the subject's partner. This is in line with Tandrianti and Darminto (2018) who stated that the need for security is also a factor that encourages teenagers to date. This need consists of the need for a sense of security that drives the individual to obtain tranquility, certainty and order. As the three subjects who decide to start a relationship are raised because of a sense of liking or attraction to each other and not from the coercion of the other person. This is also in line with Santika and Permana (2021) that the reason adolescents start a relationship is that they are attracted to each other, support each other in positive terms, expand relationships, motivate each other, and obtain pleasure.

All three subjects stated that the thing they get when they are dating is a toxic relationship in their relationship. The toxic relationship they experience is not far from possessiveness and restrictions on the social interaction of their respective partners. This is in line with *Wahyuni et al.*, (2020) that one of the actions of toxic relationships is characterized by psychic violence, namely by possessive behavior and providing movement limits for socializing with the aim of mastering the partner. One of the subjects gets behaviors from toxic relationships such as non-verbal violence from their partner. The non-verbal behavior in question is physical violence received by the subject such as punching each other and grabbing each other to the point of causing bruises all over the body. According to *Wahyuni et al.*, (2020) toxic relationships are characterized by physical violence such as hitting and pinching which are actions that can cause pain, wounds, bruises, or suffering for the victim who experiences it.

Unlike the GN subject, the AZ subject and the RA subject did not get verbal violence. Both AZ and RA subjects experienced only verbal violence such as playing victims and throwing harsh words at the subject. This is in line with *Wahyuni et al.* (2020) who said verbal violence is violence carried out through the use of words that cause harm to a person's feelings and psychology. According to Praptiningsih and Putra (2021), verbal violence can occur anywhere and adolescents usually occurs in the relationship they are in.

According to Astriani and Satiningsih (2021), the impact is most often felt by adolescents who experience toxic relationships, namely psychological impacts such as frequent daydreaming, stress, and distress. According to Effendy (2021) individuals who experience toxic relationships will tend to be someone who is easily overthinking because they think about all the bad things or negative things that will happen in their relationship. One of the subjects often experiences stress and distress and often daydreams when he is alone. The same thing is experienced by other subjects, namely that the subject experiences a feeling of pressure due to limited interaction with their friends. This is because at the time of dating, the subject's partner is possessive and excessively restrained. As felt by all three subjects also experienced feelings of stress and distress while in a dating relationship. This makes it difficult for all three subjects to concentrate and like to overthink things.

Other impacts felt by adolescents who experience toxic relationships are physical impacts such as physical violence of slapping, strangling, gripping, and scratching, which causes bruises, bruises, cuts, abrasions, and fractures (Safitri & Sama'i, 2013). This is experienced by one of the subjects, he has bruises as a result of fighting with his partner. The subject realized that his body had bruises when he was staying at his friend's house. However, at that time the subject did not want to take the headache and chose to remain silent. Safitri and Sama'i (2013) also mention other impacts, namely social impacts such as the subject's partner controlling and controlling his partner both in terms of association, appearance, and work. This is experienced by both subjects whose association is limited by their partner. One of the subjects is forbidden to meet with his friends often, as well as with the other.

This research was conducted with scientific procedures, but still has weaknesses and limitations such as determining the timing of interviews with the three subjects. The three subjects have their own activities such as going to school and studying. This caused the researcher to have to adjust the schedule with the subjects and several times had to rearrange the interview schedule. Not only subjects and researchers who have a busy schedule, difficulties in terms of searching journal literature are also difficulties in this study.

V. CONCLUSION

The description of the phenomenon of toxic relationships among adolescents and the factors that influence it is that the three subjects get unpleasant experiences during the interweaving of similar factors that influence the occurrence of toxic relationships, namely internal factors such as the need for a sense of security and external factors such as the presence of coercion from the surrounding environment.

The advice of this study is for adolescents who want to decide to establish a relationship with the opposite sex in order to get to know more about the nature and disposition of the potential partner, do not rush in making decisions, understand the consequences of the decision to establish a relationship with another person. to teenagers to be able to face problems in their romantic relationships. Pay attention to the attitude and treatment that the couple gives to him. When all the treatment and attitudes that our partner has given, us have begun to lead negatively, we must be able to discuss it with our partner. If it has been discussed, but there is no change, then we must be able to make decisions to avoid toxic relationships that will occur. We do need to pay attention to others, but we must respect ourselves first. That way, we will easily let go of things that are felt to be detrimental to ourselves.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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