

Literature Review: Emotional Regulation and Toxic Relationships in Late Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of toxic relationships has recently come under public scrutiny due to its widespread prevalence. This issue typically focuses on middle and late adulthood or parenting. This study examines the importance of emotional regulation and toxic relationships in late adolescence through a literature review. A literature review examines theories through the depth and breadth of previous research, including reviews of published journals and books. In general, it was found that the phenomenon of toxic relationships has pervaded late adolescence, and its relationship with emotional regulation is significantly negative. This means that if an individual has good or high emotional regulation, a toxic relationship will not occur. Conversely, if their emotional regulation is poor or low, a toxic relationship will occur.

Keywords : Emotion Regulation, Toxic Relationship, Late Adolescents

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a developmental stage in humans encompassing three aspects: biological, psychological, and socioeconomic, spanning the ages of 10-20. Adolescents are individuals who develop, beginning to show secondary sexual characteristics and reaching sexual maturity. Adolescents are individuals who experience psychological development from childhood to adulthood, and they transition from complete socioeconomic dependence to independence (Sarwono, 2020).

Late adolescents reach the ages of seventeen to twenty-two. They experience a lengthy transition from late adolescence to adulthood. Late adolescents will consider their values and develop relationships with their parents, providing guidance for their future (Syamsu Yusuf & Nani M Sugandhi in Suryana, 2022).

Every teenager must adjust to the opposite sex and accept relationships they have never had before within their family or school. To achieve their desired goals and navigate these social influences, adolescents must adapt to their new environment. The influence of their peer group provides new values in choosing the right friends, fostering a sense of comfort and mutual respect, and fostering new values in choosing leaders within the organizations they join (Sarwono, 2020).

According to the 2024 Annual Report of the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Catahu), there were 1,873 cases, with dating violence ranking third. The data also shows that dating violence has reached 40% among both men and women at the junior high

and high school levels in recent years. The emergence of dating violence cases continues to increase in line with the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been going on for exactly one year since March 2021. These cases occur both in person and online. Of these cases, there were 51 reports of dating violence, ranking third in the number of cases of violence against women. This data demonstrates the unequal nature of dating relationships in society, leading to acts of violence, including psychological, physical, economic, and sexual violence (Apriantika, 2021).

Violence in adolescent romantic relationships is a serious issue that requires attention from various parties, including families, schools, and communities. A sociological understanding of the causes and impacts of this violence is crucial for developing protection, prevention, and intervention strategies (Razzak et al., 2024).

LITURATURE REVIEW

A toxic relationship is a relationship between an individual or group that is unhealthy and destructive, and can even be murderous. An unhealthy relationship only benefits one party, while the other party is harmed (Wismanto, 2019). Furthermore, Wulandari (2019) states that toxic relationships are very dangerous because they occur not only among young people but also among older couples. Julianto (Young, 2022) states that a toxic relationship is an unhealthy relationship involving oneself and others, which can cause internal conflict within oneself. Meanwhile, Putri (Young, 2022) states that in toxic relationships, the use of violence is often considered a way to resolve conflicts or problems between partners.

Fincham and Linfield (Izzati, 2022) identified five dimensions of toxic relationships: negative interaction quality, satisfaction with sacrifice, vengeance toward partner, hostile conflict behavior, and disagreement tolerance. Negative interaction quality refers to a relationship where communication lacks bonding, leading to predominantly one-way communication and resulting in verbal abuse. Satisfaction with sacrifice refers to estrangement due to dissatisfaction with the sacrifices made by a partner. Vengeance toward partner refers to retaliation as a means of protection and seeking justice for oneself, demonstrating the vulnerability of the relationship. Hostile conflict behavior refers to a lack of understanding of differences in character and behavior, leading to hostile conflict in uncomfortable and desperate situations. Disagreement tolerance refers to a lack of tolerance for differences of opinion, which triggers vulnerability in the relationship.

(Mayorita, 2021) outlined four factors influencing toxic relationships: someone experiencing anxious attachment due to previous neglect; someone experiencing avoidant attachment due to previous disappointment; someone experiencing parental authority; and someone experiencing attachment hunger. These four factors are indicated as emotional aspects that influence survivors of toxic relationships. Therefore, good emotional regulation is necessary so that individuals can recognize that their relationship is toxic and needs to be resolved.

According to Gross (Mirza et al., 2024), emotional regulation is a person's ability to control their thoughts and behavior, including both positive and negative emotions. Furthermore, Silaen and Dewi (Lianawati et al., 2024) define emotional regulation as an individual's ability to recognize and understand their emotions, managing and modifying them according to their needs. Gross (Johanna et al., 2017) stated that there are five strategies in regulating

emotions, namely situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change, and response modification. Situation selection is an individual approaching, avoiding situations that trigger their emotions or doing activities that can reduce their emotions. Situation modification is an individual changing the environment that creates situations that can trigger their emotions. Attentional deployment is an individual shifting their focus of attention from focusing on situations that trigger their emotions to other focuses, for example from focusing on violence to funny things so that their emotions are reduced. Cognitive change is an individual changing the way they think, assess and respond to the situation they face by reassessing their understanding of the situation and their suffering until their emotions are reduced. Response modification is an individual modifying their behavioral response to the situation and their suffering by doing relaxation, exercise and expressing positive emotions and behavior.

Stable emotional regulation is demonstrated by those who maintain emotional control, such as avoiding the use of violence to resolve conflicts. Because they can demonstrate acceptable emotional responses and behaviors, those with stable emotional regulation have fewer toxic relationships (Lianawati et al., 2024).

METHODS

The methodology used in this journal is a literature review that reviews previous research results, with the aim of identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing research results and ideas generated by previous researchers and practitioners. According to Okoli & Schabram (2015), a literature review is a review of theories from the depth or breadth of previous research results to conduct research. The literature review was conducted using Google Scholar based on the theme raised with a maximum publication period of 5-10 years from the writing of this journal, namely in 2025.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

The results of the research by Johanna et al., (2017) which is *Emotion Regulation on Wives Victims of Domestic Violence in Christianity Undergoing the Forgiveness Phases and the research The Power of God's Word in Achieving Forgiveness* (Case Study on Wives Victims of Domestic Violence in Christian Families) (Johanna et al., 2018) through qualitative research with three adult research subjects, found that individuals who experience violence tend to experience negative emotions that make them unable to forgive (unforgiveness). Most of the emotional regulation strategies used to achieve forgiveness are cognitive changes by reassessing the suffering they feel and experience from domestic violence (KDRT) as well as understanding and applying God's word from the Bible.

(Harningrum's, 2023) qualitative research on two female subjects aged 20-25 who had been in a toxic relationship for approximately one year and experienced physical, verbal, and psychological violence found that the causes of toxic relationships were infidelity, threats, excessive lack of transparency, anxiety, and a power imbalance between genders. She recommended that victims raise awareness of violence, channel negative emotions appropriately, and seek help from those closest to them and those who are experts in trauma management.

(Purnomosidi, 2024) conducted a qualitative study on seven college students who were dating and in toxic relationships, finding that each partner did not yet have good emotional regulation because they still experienced violence, sadness, disappointment, and unhappiness in their relationship. Then, (Herdiani & Hidayat, 2023), who conducted quantitative research on 143 respondents aged 17-22 years and domiciled in Bekasi, found that there was a significant relationship between emotional regulation and toxic relationships in late adolescence $p < 0.001$, $r = -0.483$. This means that there is a negative relationship between emotional regulation and toxic relationships, namely the higher the emotional regulation, the lower the toxic relationship, and vice versa.

This is in line with research conducted by (Young & Huwae, 2022) on students in Salatiga aged 18-25 years old, using variables such as emotional regulation, dating violence, and toxic relationships. They stated that there is a relationship between emotional regulation and toxic relationships ($p = 0.010$, $r = -0.364$). The results of this study indicate a negative relationship between emotional regulation and toxic relationships, meaning that the higher the emotional regulation, the lower the toxic relationship, and vice versa.

This statement is supported by the research findings of (Sumayyah & Komarudin, 2024), who examined the contribution of emotional regulation to toxic relationships in dating college students using quantitative research methods. The study's 192 college students aged 18-25 found a significant negative relationship between emotional regulation and toxic relationships. This means that the higher the emotional regulation of dating college students, the lower the toxic relationship, and vice versa. Their research found that emotional regulation contributed 10.4% to toxic relationships. The remaining 89.6% came from other factors not included in their study, namely the perpetrator's experience as a victim of violence, familiarity with violent behavior, peer influence, and the influence of alcohol.

CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review of the research results above, it can be concluded that the phenomenon of toxic relationships in late adolescence and early adulthood is common in various universities and cities. Furthermore, several qualitative and quantitative studies on emotional regulation and toxic relationships in late adolescence and early adulthood found a significant negative correlation. This means that if emotional regulation is poor or low, a toxic relationship is likely to occur. Conversely, if emotional regulation is good or high, a toxic relationship is unlikely.

Therefore, it can be concluded that addressing the issue of toxic relationships in late adolescence is crucial for improving emotional regulation skills. If this becomes a national phenomenon, it could even be used as a suggestion for a national training program to improve emotional regulation in order to produce mentally healthy, resilient, and superior human resources (HR) in realizing Indonesia Emas 2045.

LIMITATION

The author acknowledges the limitations of this literature review, namely the limited number of journals and books reviewed due to time constraints. Furthermore, the author has not found any journals on emotional regulation and toxic relationships with research locations in other

cities in Indonesia, only from Bekasi and Surabaya. It is recommended that research be expanded to other cities in Indonesia to observe the development of the toxic relationship phenomenon. The study respondents were still at the university level; there were no late adolescents at the senior high school level. It is recommended that researchers interested in examining emotional regulation and toxic relationships in late adolescents in senior high school (SMU) can provide a better understanding of the toxic relationship issues surrounding high school. Further research using qualitative methods is recommended to determine which emotional regulation strategies are most effective. It is also recommended that research focus on the role of social media in emotional regulation skills in toxic relationships to illustrate the factors of social media's role, considering that today's young generation is an active social media user.

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