Restoration of Trust in Toxic Relationships

Mary Philia Elisabeth[1], Evanda Danara Uthama[2]

[1,2]Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Surabaya, Indonesia
maryphilia03@gmail.com

Abstract

This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological paradigm that examines the recovery process of someone who has an infidelity in dating. A person's perspective and attitude towards a dating relationship will affect the quality of a courtship relationship. Toxic relationships or unhealthy romantic relationships can cause serious problems in relationships. Some of the negative impacts experienced by someone who was cheated on, one of which is a decreased sense of trust when going back to build a relationship with someone else and a sense of self-blame. It takes a long time to recover the emotions and trust that have been betrayed. The researcher tried to find out more deeply about the uniqueness of the recovery process of each participant and the trust that was formed in that process. This study was supported by two participants who underwent seven recovery processes according to Marshall (2016), although their different infidelity experiences made the process not sequential. The environmental assistance and the desire from oneself made the participants' trust in themselves increase, both in their relationships with other people and in their self-confidence.

I. Introduction

Toxic relationship is a type of unhealthy relationship, which is built on conflict, competition, and the need for one person to control another person (Glass, 1995). This relationship can be regarded as an unhealthy relationship that destroys each other, where commitments are built based on the mutual distrust. Meanwhile, the ideal and healthy relationship is a relationship based on commitment and affection, which is connected by trust (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1983, in Rempel, Holmes & Zanna, 1985). One of the factors in the formation of an ideal relationship is when a person has a perception and trust in others (Deutsch & Coleman, 2006). This means that healthy or unhealthy relationships return to the characteristics of the people who undergo these relationships.

Every child constructs a perception of the world starting from the family, which is mostly from the parents. When they reach adulthood, children are expected to be able to develop biologically, cognitively, and socioemotionally (Santrock, 2012). Children who have entered adulthood, initially will tend to choose to live independently and begin to break away from the influence of their parents. According to Erik Erikson (Santrock, 2012), in this stage, children begin to focus on their relationships with other people, with bonds that are more intimate than in previous stages of development. If it fails, in the seseorangal will arise a sense of isolation from the surrounding environment. Therefore, a person's perception and emotional attachment developed since childhood can have an impact on the formation of

secure or insecure attachments within a human. This feeling of security or insecurity will have an impact on the form of a healthy or unhealthy relationship. Children are also part of the young generation, as one of the human resources, which is the potential and successor to the ideals of the nation's struggle, which has a strategic role and has special characteristics and traits (Rizal, 2020). Children are the mandate of God given to parents. For this mandate, Allah obliges every parent to care for, nurture and educate children to become good, smart, noble children and to avoid things that are not good (Hendra, 2019). Family communication always provides the necessary recognition and support from parents to their children (Thariq, 2018).

Havighurst (Santrock, 2015) states that a person in early adulthood, to fulfill his developmental task, will begin to choose a life partner. The person will begin to sort out their relationships, one of which is friendship. A person usually chooses friends based on their similarities and needs. Friendships that are maintained by someone will have a higher level of intimacy than before. In addition to friendship, someone who enters early adulthood, will begin to develop a relationship in a more intimate form, namely dating.

Dating relationships that are built by someone are closer, warmer, and more intimate than those when someone was a teenager (Furman and Wehner, 1998 in Santrock, 2012). An adult will use the romantic relationship of his parents as a role model to build a relationship with the opposite sex (Santrock, 2012). When a daughter has a close relationship with her father, this affects the child's perspective on everything (Nielsen, 2012), including choosing a partner and forming a relationship. The closer children are to their fathers, the more fathers have a major role in changing children's perceptions of their target partners and romantic relationships (Li & Kerpelman, in Nielsen, 2012).

Trust is the key to a relationship, especially in a romantic context. Rempel, Holmes and Zanna (in Rempel, Ross & Holmes, 2001) also discussed the importance of instilling trust in partners. Trust is very hard and takes a long time to build, but it is very easy to break it(Glass & Staeheli, 2003). One of the most serious problems that couples usually face is infidelity. Infidelity is often seen as a negative issue that also has a negative impact on the person being cheated on, even on the relationship itself. Ica and Lia, the participants of this study, also felt a crisis of trust that greatly affected the environment and their new relationship after experiencing an affair.

Infidelity has negative impacts such as the cheated seseorangal being afraid to re-commitment (Williams & Hickle, 2011). Mental impacts can also attack someone who is being cheated on, such as stress, depression, anxiety disorders, PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) (Fincham & May, 2017) and loss of identity, decreased desire to return to a dating relationship, and shutting oneself off from all relationships. (Spring & Spring, 2008).

Rebuilding trust after experiencing an affair is the basis of an emotional recovery process (Glass & Staeheli, 2003). Everyone has a unique recovery process and method. Various activities are alternative choices to divert yourself from emotional wounds, such as sleeping, eating, reading, writing, and others (Rosenbloom & Williams, 2010).

This research was conducted qualitatively, because the researcher wanted to know the process of emotional recovery and trust after experiencing the infidelity experienced by Ica and Lia. These two participants are interesting to tell their stories, because they both experience not only an emotional affair, but also a physical affair.

II. Research Methods

This research is qualitative research with a phenomenological paradigm with an interpretive approach. Phenomenology can be seen as a mindset that emphasizes human participatory experience, and how and to what extent these experiences can be formed. The purpose of using the phenomenological paradigm in this study is to explain in detail the seseorangal experiences and explain how participants interpret their experiences in detail (Smith, 2009).

Data was collected by means of semistandardized interviews. This interview is included in the in-dept interview, in which the author makes the core of the questions that will be asked to the participants but can be modified during the conduct of the interview in terms of language and sequence. This interview aims to see and find new perspectives from participants regarding the phenomenon raised. Data were collected from two participants with criteria for female sex, aged 21 to 30 years, and had been cheated on in a romantic relationship.

The data analysis technique used is thematic analysis which consists of four main steps, including compiling interview transcripts, identifying themes, organizing themes, and narrating potential themes. The researcher asked for the consent of the two participants before the data collection process and during the data analysis process.

III. Discussion

3.1 Results
a. Interpersonal Relations

Ica and Ica's father's closeness is like a pair of shoes, side by side and inseparable. Since childhood, Ica's father always took Ica wherever he went. Ica's father chose to move to a lighter job that could be done at home to accompany Ica. In addition to a more relaxed workflow like his character, Ica's father has more time to accompany and do activities with Ica.

His father's consistent authoritative upbringing freed Ica to explore (Carr, 2006), making Ica grow into an organized, disciplined, well-planned, hardworking, and consistent person in making decisions. When Ica is angry because she has to do many things, Ica's father's job is to remind Ica to rest and work slowly. Ica's father is worried about all of Ica's busyness, but he believes that Ica is a strong woman who is able to complete all work and its obstacles (Nielsen, 2012).

Contrary to the relationship Ica had with her father, Ica's mother was the type of person who couldn't break her concentration. When you are doing a job, you cannot be disturbed by other work. Therefore, Ica and her family often move from Jogjakarta to Surabaya, even to Japan to support her mother's work (Shwalb, Nakazawa, Yamamoto and Jung-Hwan Hyun in Lamb, 2010). Ica's mother's character is the opposite of her father's. Ibu Ica is a typical worker who likes to be busy and can't stay still. This also happened to Ica.

Ica's childhood, which always moved house with her family, made Ica inevitably have to adapt quickly (Myers, 2012). Moving around the area makes Ica have many friends, but Ica remains a closed Ica and can only be open with her father. Ica tends to be more comfortable with friends who have the same characteristics as her father.

Unlike Ica's father who always makes time for Ica, Lia's father is a hard worker. According to Lia, her father is busy working to fulfill his obligations, so he never has free time to exchange stories with other family members. The same way of speaking makes Lia and her father sometimes get into fights if they have different views. Her father's reaction every time he heard Lia's wish or opinion, made Lia not want to say it again. Lia chose to

remain silent and kept her distance from her father, even though Lia was aware that this was not a good thing. Lia realized that when she fought, she was against the head of the family. He also prefers to be silent, because he is afraid of his father (Knibiehler in Lamb, 2010). Lia hopes that her family, especially father as the head of the family, can adjust the tone and way of speaking, so that it is more comfortable to hear especially for Lia.

For Lia, her relationship with her mother is not much different from that of Lia and her father. Lia and her mother also do not have a warm relationship like most mothers and daughters. Lia tends to be uncomfortable with her mother who is considered to be seeking too much attention.

According to her, Lia's relationship with her older brother is the most distant. Since childhood, Lia and her older brother always lived together but were never close at all. Even when playing, Lia and her older brother only play Play Station. Lia, as a younger sister and only daughter, wants to be noticed by her older brother. Moreover, hearing her friends say that an older brother always protects and can be a place for stories, makes Lia really want an older brother figure. Lia's hope that her family can establish close relationships began to open when Lia was in the process of working on her thesis.

Lia admits that she is more open with her friends than with her family. Although Lia has told her family several times, Lia is more comfortable talking to her friends. According to Lia, her friends will comment honestly on her story, but in a softer language compared to Lia's family comments that always put Lia in a corner. This makes Lia feel more comfortable talking to her friends than her family, because she feels she gets a positive situation and love that she doesn't get in her family (DeVito, 2013).

The experience of building relationships in the family between Ica and Lia influences the perception and the way the two establish relationships in friendship. Ica, who often moves from one area to another, has many friends, but seems hesitant in establishing deep friendships, even though her relationship with her parents can be said to be warm. Lia, although her family relationships are marked by differences that trigger disputes, but she can build warm relationships with her friends.

b. Infidelity Experience

As a human who does not want to be controlled by anyone, Ica has her own goals in building relationships.

> "…beda-beda ya… Itu tuh masih kayak yaudah menikmati masa remaja lah ibaratnya. Jadi belum yang muluk-muluk banget mencari jodoh dan sebagainya gitu. Terus makin kesini sekarang aku udah kuliah, yang sekarang aku sudah mulai mikir kedepan gitu… aku sudah mulai memikirkan kedepan ya pengennya menjalin komitmen yang lebih tinggi lagi…" (Ica, 14 Maret 2019)

Along with Ica's age, the higher Ica's expectations in dating relationships. Ica's strong character adheres to the principle of encouraging Ica to be dominant in any relationship. In fact, he tends to be demanding in determining the criteria for his potential partner, such as in terms of academics and careers. The concept of a balanced relationship for Ica is on the same academic and career abilities and potential.

> "…ayahku dari kecil itu cukup demokratis ya. Jadi mau ikut apa apa apa terserah gitu…" (Ica, 26 September 2019).

Ica believes that she must find a partner like her father. Being an only child and getting all the attention and affection of her parents makes Ica not understand how it feels to be jealous and loved by someone other than her father.

The pain of hope. The sentence was very appropriate for Ica. Ica, who is very obsessed with academics, is always looking for a boyfriend with a high academic background. In her search for a partner who meets her expectations, Ica experiences two infidelities.

Similar to Ica, Lia also has certain expectations when she builds romantic relationships with men. For Lia, dating is one of the steps towards a more serious relationship, namely marriage. Lia is looking for an older brother figure that matches her desires in friends and partners, therefore she prefers a male character who is older and caring, like the older brother in Lia's shadow which she did not get from her biological sister. Lia also had two extramarital affairs.

The role of men in the family becomes the ideal character used by Ica and Lia in choosing a partner. In fact, the ideal character becomes more perfect over time, meaning that there is hope that accompanies the image of the character of the chosen partner. When these expectations are not found in partners, emotional wounds in the form of disappointment arise in both study participants. The emotional wounds are more evident when there is an affair committed by their respective partners. If it only happened once, it could be said to be a coincidence. But infidelity that occurs more than once can be a sign of an unhealthy relationship pattern, or better known as a toxic relationship.

c. Trust

The experience of infidelity made Ica now more careful and suspicious in building relationships (Lewicki in Deutsch & Coleman, 2006).

> "…misalkan nih persentase ya, 60% aku pulih gitu, 40% jangan dulu, soalnya kalo all dikasi ke dia terus kemungkinan ke depan kita gak tau, kecewanya lebih jauh, jadi aku keep 40%..." (Ica, 26 September 2019).

Ica said that she did not want to fully trust her future partner, for fear of being disappointed again (Lewicki in Deutsch & Coleman, 2006). Actually, not disappointed, but the plan that Ica had painstakingly compiled was instantly lost. This makes Ica reluctant to plan again in the future. In addition, Ica asked for evidence from the man who approached her. If the man said he would be serious, Ica would ask for proof, she now doesn't just believe in words.

> "…kenapa sih salah gagalnya itu selalu sama gitu lo, dan yaa itu akhirnya yang membuat aku antara menyalahkan diri sendiri…" (Ica, 12 September 2019).

Twice experienced infidelity made Ica start to think where her fault was. Ica realized that in this case, it was not only the party who had an affair that was at fault, but also from her.

Lia's childhood experience, knowing her mother's infidelity, made Lia build the highest self-defense around her partner. Lia was scared and tried to protect herself so as not to feel the discomfort her father felt when he found out his wife was having an affair.

The infidelity that Lia feels attacks her self-confidence more. Lia blames herself for repeating the same incident as her father (Startup, Makgekgenene, & Webster, 2007). She had given up everything for his partner and was betrayed again. Previously, Lia had been warned by her friends and ended up falling again in the same hole. Lia's identity is lost along

with her confidence in herself. Lia always wonders why she was cheated on, if she lacks beauty and talent. Then it made her confidence plummeted.

The infidelity experience experienced by Ica and Lia not only destroys trust in their partner and commitment, but also raises doubts in themselves. A romantic relationship that was originally sought based on hope, becomes a relationship that is built on doubts about oneself and one's partner. This is then not realized into a recurring pattern involving oneself in toxic or unhealthy types of relationships.

d. Recovery Process

Ica defines a sense of recovery, when she is no longer afraid to re-support a status on her shoulders. For Ica at this time, status was not too important. It could just be a relationship. If it fits directly into the marriage stage, instead of having to re-establish status and go through many further steps. This also makes Ica look unable to put her trust in her potential partner, so she doesn't dare to return to being in a status relationship. Ica is aware that affection is a need and she needs it.

In the experience of this failed application, Ica realized that this problem was more complex and required a lot of energy and time to recover. For two months Ica tried to get back up from her slump. He started his recovery process by reducing the frequency of playing social media, especially Instagram. Ica only opens Instagram on Saturdays and Sundays. Ica doesn't want to be influenced by information she doesn't want to know. After undergoing the second recovery process, Ica began to feel the difference in terms of time, effect and how to recover and rebuild relationships with other people.

Ica realized that all this time she was too loud and prestige. Her father's words that show Ica that she is a strong woman, are interpreted too deeply by Ica that she does not need a man. Ica hopes to recover from her own thoughts. Ica, who is very close to her father, is aware that she still needs a man in her life (Nielsen, 2012).

> "…aku berpikir kayak gini terus loh, mas loh udah seneng-seneng sama selingkuhannya, buat apa aku mikir hal yang juga gak mikirin aku gitu loh, mas aja loh udah gak peduli sama kamu, dia loh udah seneng-seneng terus kamu mau terpuruk kayak gini sampe berapa lama…" (Lia, 10 September 2019).

That is the beginning of all the processes that Lia has gone through so far. Based on Lia's confession, she seems to be not on good terms with her partner. This is reinforced by Lia still blocking all of her partner's social media. Lia believes this can help her recover faster after the tough times she has been through.

For Lia, recovery is when Lia is able to accept herself and can rebuild the identity she has lost. Lia can accept herself as not a virgin, and change her self-concept which initially thought that no man would want a woman who was not a virgin.

Luckily, Lia has four close friends who always accompany and support her during her recovery process. Lia spends more time with her close friends, because she doesn't want to be alone. Lia also uses music as a means to recover her emotions. Lia has loved music since she was little and often appears on stage. For Lia, by playing music, she is more able to express her emotions and control them. Lia likes to play her keyboard every day for about two hours while singing. In addition, this method can speed up the recovery process. At least, all the negative emotions that Lia feels can be released (Hallam, Cross, & Thaut, 2016).

For Lia, the recovery process she goes through always provides new lessons and colors for her to learn. Lia also hopes that she will continue to get new colors in her life, of course in a way that is more fun than being cheated on.

3.2 Discussion

During the development period, a person will always try to carry out his developmental tasks well. A person's developmental task in early adulthood is to build a more serious intimate relationship with someone else, one of which is to choose a life partner at a more serious level, namely marriage (Havighurst in Santrock, 2012).

One of the factors that play an important role in choosing a partner, especially for girls, is the role of the father. Girls who are attached to their fathers often look for partners who are identical to their fathers, while those who are not attached to their fathers will look for a father figure in each partner (Lamb, 2010). Apart from the father figure, other male figures in the family can also be influenced, such as older brothers, uncles, or grandfathers.

Getting a partner according to one's wishes, is not a guarantee that the relationship can go according to plan. One of the serious problems in dating relationships is infidelity (Simeone-DiFrancesco, Roediger & Stevens, 2015). Infidelity occurs when commitment is undermined by a partner's betrayal with another person outside of the emotional or physical relationship (Maheu & Subotnik in Whitty 2011). One of the effects is a decrease in trust in the environment which makes it difficult for a person to rebuild relationships with other people (Williams & Hickle, 2011), and feelings of blaming oneself for destroyed relationships and making a person experience anxiety and experience a decrease in self-confidence.

A cheated person finds it difficult at first because he is hesitant to re-establish a relationship with someone else. Doubt due to not believing in yourself and fear of experiencing emotional wounds Back. This makes a person have to undergo a process of recovery or improvement both physically and psychologically (American Psychology Association Dictionary, 2015).

Each person has their own way of recovering, such as by sleeping, eating, reading, writing, and others (Rosenbloom & Williams, 2010), depending on one's experience and perception of the activities he or she is doing. Marshall (2016) states that there are seven stages of recovery, starting from the beginning when someone finds out that their partner is having an affair, the impact on someone is fully recovered and can accept the incident. The key to one's success in recovering depends on one's willingness to recover. If someone has a great will to recover and has the intention to start living step by step, then that person is one step closer to their original life (Gordon et al., 2005 in Snyder & Lopez, 2007).

Twice experienced infidelity made Ica began to look for the fault. Ica realized that in this case it was not only someone who had an affair that was at fault, but also from her. Ica feels that the affair she experienced was indeed based on her mistake and indeed she must be held accountable for it (Rokach & Philibert-Lignieres, 2015). Ica is aware that she still maintains a communication pattern that is clearly not good communication. Ica also becomes anxious and blames herself (Bandura, 1997; Williams, 1995 in Maddux, 2012). Distrust in Ica led her to make a small notebook containing the questions she should ask the men who approach her, either now or in the future. The small notebook also contains Ica's targets, what she should know when a man approaches her and the stages when a man proposes to her.

The infidelity that Lia feels attacks her self-confidence more. Lia blames herself for repeating the same incident as her father (Startup, Makgekgenene, & Webster, 2007). It is very difficult for Lia to build her trust again, especially in men who want to approach her (Lewicki in Deutsch & Coleman, 2006). Lia became more interested in making a face-to-face approach rather than through virtual social media, because for Lia she was able to get to know other people's characters more than talking directly. It is undeniable that Lia wants to have a relationship again, but she is afraid to try. Twice experiences of infidelity, made Lia tired of building trust in others. Lia became more protective of herself because she was afraid of being betrayed again.

IV. Conclusion

Infidelity experienced negative impacts such as a crisis of trust in relationships with other people and self-blame which also makes self-confidence low. Distrust in oneself and others can form unhealthy relationship patterns or better known as toxic relationships. This makes a person have to undergo a recovery process to recover and can be released from the negative effects of infidelity.

Someone who has been cheated on goes through a long process of accepting the fact of infidelity that has occurred and has the courage to get out of the relationship to restore self-confidence while healing the emotional wounds that come from the relationship. When undergoing this recovery process, a person will not necessarily go through every stage in the recovery process or still go through all of them but not sequentially. This depends on the phenomenon experienced by a person and how much impact it has on someone who is being cheated on.

After starting the recovery process, a person's confidence can increase when his affection needs are met by people who act as support systems, such as friends and family. Several supporting factors such as the support of friends and family really help a person in restoring his confidence. However, the biggest role they have is themselves, who consciously have a strong desire to recover and bounce back.

This recovery process can also be supported by positive activities that a person can do according to their respective talents and interests. In addition to helping a person to go through the recovery process faster, these activities help a person to regain his confidence, especially in themselves.

The limitation of this research lies in the process of building participant trust. The two participants who had their trust betrayed still found it difficult to trust others again, including the researcher. Researchers need a long time to build participant trust and finally get all the data needed. Suggestions for further research are that future researchers can examine the process of forgiveness of participants towards themselves, the situation, and the perpetrators of the affair.

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