

## Motives and Meanings of Toxic Relationships in Adolescent Interpersonal Relationships in Pontianak City

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### Abstract

*This study focuses on adolescents who are entangled in unhealthy relationships in courtship. A toxic relationship is one in which there is no sense of support for each other. This relationship involves emotional violence, toxic parents, and verbal and nonverbal psychological violence. Therefore, this study discusses the phenomenology of motives & the meaning of toxic relationships to find out what the motives are and how to interpret unhealthy relationships, in this study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to motives and meanings. The results showed that the form of violence experienced by the informant became a form of verbal and digital violence because the actions taken by their partners were acts of limiting freedom. The informant persists because of the habit of living together, great affection, fear of being alone, and the threat given by his partner.*

### Keywords

a motive; meaning; toxic relationship; adolescent; interpersonal communication.



### I. Introduction

All humans carry out the communication process between one another because humans are social creatures who easily interact interpersonally and in groups. Communication makes conveying all messages with the intent and purpose easier (Saleh, 2018). Of course, a fellow human being would want to interact freely. This makes us fellow humans want to establish a more intense relationship starting from the closest environment, family environment, and of course, the social environment such as schools, colleges, peers, partners, and co-workers (Dewi & Handayani, 2013).

In communicating, humans often feel lonely when not interacting with other humans. Humans also have many needs, one of which is social needs, namely the need to be loved (Nur, 2017). Not only love between parents and children, but humans want to be loved more by other humans with different relationships called courtship status. Therefore, over time, as humans, social beings who interact with anyone, humans with other humans may want to have and need more intimate interactions, especially with their loved ones, namely partners (Wulandari et al., 2021). Human Resources (HR) is the most important component in a company or organization to run the business it does. Organization must have a goal to be achieved by the organizational members (Niati et al., 2021). Development is a change towards improvement. Changes towards improvement require the mobilization of all human resources and reason to realize what is aspired (Shah et al, 2020). The development of human resources is a process of changing the human resources who belong to an organization, from one situation to another, which is better to prepare a future responsibility in achieving organizational goals (Werdhiastutie et al, 2020).

The more people grow and develop, the more they interact with the social world. During adolescence, dating is a stage process for the maturation of self. Many teenagers in the current generation tend to want to have a relationship with dating status (Othman et al.,

2016). They want to have someone who can always give them love, happiness, affection, attention, and sweetness in their lives. In adolescence, this plays an important role in the emotional development of the self. This courtship activity also often helps self-development, namely by exploring oneself, being able to understand others, being able to change views, and being able to change oneself for the better (El-Hakim, 2014).

According to Knight (2004), courtship is a process and a plan to unite two people of the opposite sex where they are attracted to each other in a certain phase. This can also be a casual relationship process or one that reaches a more serious stage. Every human being wants so many expectations, especially wanting their relationship always to run smoothly and end up in marriage. Usually, a courtship relationship involves hope, affection, love, sacrifice, and struggle. Until these two couples want to reach the point of happiness (Alfiani, 2020), it will be a different story if the things of happiness are not fulfilled as desired by couples. Therefore, this courtship relationship makes them find unfair treatment or action in their relationship in verbal and nonverbal forms (Radde & Gunawan, 2021).

The phenomenon of verbal violence in dating relationships is also called a toxic relationship. According to Sutikno (2010), verbal violence is the same as the crime of feelings by throwing harsh words without physical contacts, such as defamation, intimidation, humiliation, and exaggerating something or the mistakes of others, is a form of verbal violence. This has often happened in dating relationships, but the victim or perpetrator is usually unaware. This often happens to women. Even in a relationship experiences ups and downs; this toxic relationship is constantly draining energy for the couple who run it. Toxic relationships hurt inner happiness and mental health (Julianto et al., 2020). The violence that occurs is included in the deviation of behavior. Lillian Glass (1997) defines a toxic relationship as a lack of mutual support for one another. Where one party tries to be dominant over the other party, then El-Hakim, (2014) explained that emotional abuse is a form of violence such as swearing, intimidating, threatening, suppressing, and anger which causes the victim to feel hurt, depressed, angry, and restrained, and if it is done continuously, it can lead to feelings of inferiority towards the victim.

Toxic relationships do not look at groups, which can be experienced by all people with relationships with the opposite sex. Even though Indonesian artists experience this toxic relationship, it has also received public attention because artists have platforms to share stories on their social media pages. Toxic relationships are actions that make the victim feel uncomfortable usually; this toxic starts from a possessive attitude towards a partner (Engel, 2003). According to Jufanny & Girsang (2020), possessiveness is an attitude that arises due to a sense of insecurity in a relationship. Someone who shows a possessive attitude in a relationship has an inflated sense of anxiety about rejection. The possessive attitude manipulates the relationship, making the victim feel alone and dependent on him. In this way, the perpetrator can dominate and control the victim's life. Even more surprising is that the perpetrator is happy if the victim's life is his. If he continues to control the victim's life, that is an opportunity for him to feel lost (Akhsyin, 2018).

Teenagers are very vulnerable to experiencing toxic relationships because they have not been able to control their feelings and have not been able to manage the stress they experience. Because this toxic relationship leads more to verbal violence, the words uttered by the perpetrator will make the victim feel pessimistic, have low self-esteem, and lose self-confidence (Astari & Santosa, 2019). The impact of this toxic relationship is not only detrimental to yourself but also those around you. People who have experienced toxic

relationships are also reluctant to have relationships with new people, leave a long-lasting trauma, and trust in others also does not exist (Tedjo et al., 2021).

Interpersonal communication is something that is needed in a courtship relationship. Interpersonal communication includes establishing or building relationships between two people (Praptiningsih & Putra, 2021). According to Deddy Mulyana in Suranto (2011), interpersonal communication is between two people who seem to be able to catch reactions. Often every person who undergoes interpersonal communication there is an unsuccessful experience. Then According to Wood (2013), interpersonal communication is the center or basis of a personal relationship. The success of a personal relationship depends on how well we communicate effectively. This is what gives rise to interpersonal conflict. Likewise, in dating relationships, poor communication will lead to bad relationships. The conflict could be because the quality of the communication they live in is not conveyed.

Based on the above phenomenon, the researcher considers that this toxic relationship is an issue that must be raised because what has been described previously is that there are still many people who do not care about toxic relationship issues, especially in the city of Pontianak and in any city. This research is interesting because many teenagers, especially women, still do not want to speak up for their mental health and instead forgive the perpetrators who keep repeating themselves. This needs to get attention from the community or institutions that care for women and mental health so that women are aware and more aware of dating relationships. Therefore, this research was carried out more deeply because it wanted to know the motives and meanings of toxic relationships among teenagers in Pontianak. Researchers will look at how the victim's motives persist in the relationship, then how the victim interprets the relationship, such as how much feedback is given in the relationship, what things make the couple survive, or whether there is an effect in the relationship.

## **II. Research Method**

The research method used by the researcher is qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research itself is research with a natural purpose because the author plays an important role and the research results are more meaningful (Creswell, 2014). This qualitative research can provide more in-depth information, from which it can contain meanings that are factual information (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009). The basis of this qualitative research information is not only accurate information, namely information that occurs as a result of an event, not only what is seen, but that information is the meaning behind what is seen and said. The phenomenological approach is an understanding of the daily life of individuals. Phenomenological studies aim to clarify the meaning of concepts or conscious experiences that arise from many individuals—using a phenomenological approach to discover and reveal the motives and meanings in toxic relationships among adolescents in Pontianak City.

## **III. Result and Discussion**

This study found the motive for toxic relationships in mental health and interpersonal communication patterns. Motives are forces that exist in humans that encourage them to do something (Walgito, 2010). Motives are the behavioral reasons that underlie human actions (Guay et al., 2010). Phenomenology based on Alfred Schütz's thinking is based on experiences in the daily lives of social actors who live it (Trujillo, 2018). In this study, the

results of Alfred Schütz's phenomenological theory were found, which divided the motives into cause-motives and in-order-to motives from three informants that matched the predetermined criteria.

### 3.1 Because-Motives

Because-motives are past background conditions or reasons that cause actions or actions by social actors (Gunderson et al., 2020). From the interviews with three informants, several past reasons were found why the informants had toxic relationships. The types of toxins experienced are very diverse, ranging from mild behavior to those that have big risks. The violence is not only found verbally, but digital is also often a form of violence experienced by victims.

. From the interview session with the first resource person, a woman with the initials TW. TW as the resource person, explained that this was caused by family background factors, which could be called toxic parents or toxic family. One partner felt he did not get love from his family and had a bad background. Toxic parents are the treatment or actions of parents towards children in which they do not treat their children well, and parents do not think about their children's happiness; they only think about their happiness without realizing the child's physical and spiritual health children happiness are threatened. As a result, one partner has traits that ultimately make his partner uncomfortable, such as always restraining his partner, always being pushy, and threatening to commit suicide. This makes communication between partners even more difficult because of the many factors that make one partner uncomfortable. TW has also started to enter into a toxic relationship; TW does the opposite to his partner. As the interview results were obtained as follows:

*"Even though he is possessive and selfish, I still love him, he is always there for me and he always does whatever I want. I'm not even allowed to work because he's afraid when I divide him up."*

From the interview session with the second resource person, a woman with the initials TT. As the resource person, TT explained that there are psychological factors in the relationship, such as the lack of self-confidence. One partner has a trust crisis that makes him distrustful of others. Indirectly, her boyfriend also helped regulate the social media owned by TT, such as holding Instagram, controlling movements on social media, to tapping locations. TT, as her partner, feels that her partner's actions are acceptable because the affection is too big. The factor found by his partner was that his past had cheated on him.

TT revealed that the longer the relationship lasts, the makes their relationship does not have trust in each other; distrust will also lead to a toxic relationship which causes TT to experience unpleasant things such as being followed, scolded, and even getting inappropriate words expressed in the verbal form if the partner's wishes are not fulfilled.

*"In the past, when I was in high school, I had activities to take swimming scores; I was always told to follow and wait like monitoring me. If a friend of the opposite sex was talking to me, he immediately came over and got angry with my friend of the opposite sex."*

*"In the end, I was shunned by my classmates; I felt I didn't have friends and continued to be with him because I was afraid of being lonely."*

This makes TT feel no longer comfortable in the relationship because the longer the relationship, the more unreasonable the actions given by his partner. The communication that exists in the relationship is increasingly pointless. Even things like this have interfered with personal activities because, without realizing it, things like this make us not want to socialize with other people. All activities are hampered because they must think about their partner's words.

From the interview session with the third informant, a woman with the initials RG. RG as the informant, explained that in his relationship, there was an emotional violence factor, namely, his lover could not control himself; his lover tended to control RG's life from small things to big things, for example, arranging clothes, spending, and income, forbidding going with friends, to prohibiting going. With RG's parents. If his wish is not fulfilled, RG's lover will display a temperament towards RG to the point of saying inappropriate words.

People who are excessive in love will be willing to spend and sacrifice their energy and time to fulfill the desires of others. This can also damage the personality because it lowers women's confidence level. Loss of self-confidence causes the person not to open up and often keep what he feels alone without telling his friends or closest people. The three informants also admitted that if a toxic relationship becomes an addiction when it has already been implemented, they feel they are lazy to start a relationship again with a new person; they prefer to spend time with their lover and not make friendships; this also causes the relationship to be unhealthy. The informants also felt afraid when they wanted to end the relationship because of the threats given by each partner. The three informants also admitted that they overestimated each other in love; therefore, the informants are too late in toxic relationships; some of the expressions made by the informants are:

*"I know that I am sick, but I still love you."*

*"If you do not call or chat for a day, it feels a bit like that because you're used to him, especially if you do not feel upset."*

*"The pain is covered by my love" "The pain does not feel anything; how come."*

Those are some of the expressions that informants make when discussing their relationship; even though they are aware that they are in a toxic relationship but are lulled by affection and love, this causes an imbalance in the relationship.

Even so, RG as an informant, also revealed the prohibition given by his lover:

*"Every time I do activities outside the home such as campus association meetings, campus event committee meetings, and other things, it is definitely not allowed because he is afraid that I will do strange things that are on his mind. If I wasn't home at 9 p.m., I'd be sure to get phone calls and get angry because I wasn't home at that hour, even though I didn't even know what time the meeting was over."*

The action taken by her lover was because she was afraid that RG would travel with the opposite sex. According to RG's confession, his girlfriend did not accept that RG traveled alone without her; from that incident, RG started lying if he wanted to travel. Not only that, through an interview that took place, RG also revealed that his girlfriend often forbade going with RG's parents.

In another case, TT and TW's relationship both received acts of restraint from their lovers. However, TT and TW gradually rebelled and did not comply with requests from



their partners, which eventually caused a commotion among their lovers. TT and TW think they do not feel like they own themselves if they are constantly in a toxic relationship.

*The toxic relationship of the informants is more dominant against the background of restricting freedom, commonly referred to as restraint, and this is the same as not having freedom of oneself when on the move. This restraint can also be considered violence in a relationship because this restriction on freedom or activity is rarely realized. After all, the treatment is less visible but has a very self-harming end effect. Restraints can also cause discomfort because they are full of restrictions someone gives. At this age, it is time to socialize, establish many relationships, develop identity, and know the direction of life goals in the future. However, because of inhibitions or acts of restraint, informants become more introverted. As explained above by researchers, restraint is one of the signs of a *toxic relationship*. Sometimes emotional feelings defeat logic rather than feelings through the actions taken by the perpetrators of *toxic relationships*. Based on the above acknowledgment by the informant, the forms of violence carried out are almost the same, namely the restriction of freedom. In this case, communication is also one of the triggers for the occurrence of toxic relationships, and messages conveyed between one another are not conveyed properly. The expressions that were said to the informants made the informants feel very depressed, uncomfortable, not confident, hurt, and depressed.*

### 3.2 In Order to Motives

In-order-to motives are motives that intend to achieve future goals based on past motives (Muzzetto, 2006). Every human wants the relationship to go well and achieve a good goal. At first, there was a good goal in the relationship between TW, TT, and RG informants. In general, the initial informants have a relationship with their lover; they already have expectations for their relationship. Of course, the expected goal is to survive in the relationship, but he unwittingly destroys communication with himself to survive in a toxic relationship. With the background of each partner, the relationship they are currently undergoing is slowly entering an unhealthy relationship. The purpose of each dominant lover is the same, and they do not want TW, TT, and RG to have freedom in their activities; they always interfere with their restrained actions. The act of restraint made female informants feel insecure.

*"He always says that I have no friends and no one wants to be with me except him" (Interview with TT, June 05, 2022)*

*"I'm always called a woman who is not right if I come home after the time he set" (Interview with RG, May 25, 2022)*

*"He said this was the best way, so I do not have to be tired of working, just accompany him every day on the phone or meet every day" (Interview with TW, June 10, 2022)*

From what was conveyed by the informant, each partner wanted to have much time with the informant so that the activities carried out were slowly disrupted. Without realizing it, the expressions uttered by each partner entered the mind and became suggestions that ultimately felt that the words said were true. The act of suggestion can influence others so that the person receiving it is affected without criticism. The informant admitted that the words uttered by his lover could make him feel insecure.

This motive also occurs because of the bad past experienced by both the perpetrators and the victims. The reasons given by the three informants tend to be the same; namely, love that is too big to be difficult to let go of, the habit of living together so that they feel

unable if they are not together, do not want to start a new relationship, feel they are not worthy of others, fear because threats and family factors who already know their relationship.

### 3.3 Meaning

Meaning is related to what aspects are experienced by individuals or social actors, which are contained in actions (Muzzetto, 2006). The informants interpreted a *toxic* relationship as unhealthy and negatively impacted the physical and psychological aspects that led to mental illness.

*"The effect is really traumatizing for me, because it's okay to panic and think about it" (Interview with RG, May 25, 2022)*

*"I am afraid of being lonely because I have not had any friends since I was with him" (Interview with TT, June 05, 2022)*

*"Sometimes his demeaning words make me think about it, and I do not feel confident" (Interview with TW, June 10, 2022)*

This unhealthy relationship is also a relationship that does not support each other in carrying out activities, even more doing negative things. This creates a sense of insecurity towards themselves because of threats from their partners. Many things that trigger *toxic relationships* happen; there is no trust, dishonesty, suspicion, and severe jealousy. The three informants interpret a *toxic relationship* as essentially the same because the actions taken by each partner are also almost the same, namely the restriction of freedom or restraint on the informant.

Without realizing it, interpreting something can determine the direction of life or which path of life we will choose in the future based on experience and surrounding phenomena. This also results in increasingly ineffective communication, messages that start not to be conveyed properly, lack of openness, and lack of support from each partner. Communication that exists with oneself is also hampered due to activity restrictions, which should teenagers be able to gain experiences in the environment and build relationships but cannot. The relationship that exists does not form bad *interpersonal communication*. The purpose of interpersonal communication so that the relationship is intertwined to get *feedback* but what happens is not in line.

## IV. Conclusion

Based on research on the motives and meanings of toxic relationships among adolescents in Pontianak City, teenagers in Pontianak City already understand the impact of toxic relationships. However, most choose to stay because of the fear of loss, great affection, and reluctance to start a new relationship. From the research that has been done, most of them also realize that social activities and personal activities are disrupted. However, to reduce violence, verbal and nonverbal violence must get attention from the surrounding environment, such as the closest one, namely the family environment, friends' environment, social environment, and others. Surviving in a relationship full of violence is not a good path for mental health; indeed, all actions must have a purpose, but how do we always think about giving and receiving the action?

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affection, and reluctance to start a new relationship. From the research that has been done, most of them also realize that social activities and personal activities are disrupted. However, to reduce violence, verbal and nonverbal violence must get attention from the surrounding environment, such as the closest one, namely the family environment, friends' environment, social environment, and others. Surviving in a relationship full of violence is not a good path for mental health. Indeed, all actions must have a purpose, but how do we always think about giving and receiving the action?

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