

Why they willingly become victims of dating violence: a phenomenological study based on female adolescent perspective

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ABSTRACT

Dating has become a trend in today's youth. Psychological conditions are still unstable and are one of the triggers for violence among adolescents, and in general, female adolescents become victims. However, the female adolescents maintained the relationship. Therefore, this study aimed to conduct a phenomenological study of dating violence among female adolescents. This research is included in the type of qualitative research. Data were obtained from five key informants and five triangular informants who were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data was collected using 14 questions items submitted using the In-depth Interview technique. The interview results were transcribed using computer aided qualitative data analysis software. Based on the results of the interviews, dating is a form of self-actualization to get love and to exist among adolescents. They hope the current partner can become a life partner when they have a family. This is their reason for tolerating physical, psychological, or sexual violence perpetrated by their partner. So, female adolescents are aware that they experience violence. However, they could not avoid it because they hoped their current partner would become a life partner. These results confirm the urgency for adolescence dating violence (ADV) program implementation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is generally grouped into three periods: the initial, middle, and late [1], [2]. Curiosity, liking things that are challenging, and daring to make their own decisions without careful consideration are the phases experienced by adolescents [3]. The way of thinking and behaving in adolescence is still unstable, so every activity carried out by adolescents can potentially cause deviant behavior or an unhealthy lifestyle. Actions such as juvenile delinquency, brawls, violence, rape, drinking, or drug use often occur among teenagers today [4].

Nowadays, dating has become commonplace for teenage boys and females. Dating behavior is often identified as a source of emotional support and is most helpful for adolescents [5]. Mental and emotional states that are still unstable will encourage adolescents to commit acts of violence without thinking twice. This vulnerable situation makes every problem in dating difficult to deal with and seems complicated. Immature mindsets in adolescents encourage every action to potentially lead to violence [6], [7]. Situations like this make dating activities in adolescents very vulnerable to causing violence [8]. Therefore, dating violence is an important issue that often occurs in adolescence. Various forms of violence that generally occur among dating teenagers are physical, sexual, and emotional violence [9]–[13]. The most common

adolescents dating violence (ADV) is psychological violence (21-39%), then physical (9-17%), and then sexual (3%) [14]. Similar findings were also summarized by Exner-Cortens *et al.* [15] from various reports.

ADV that occurs today is very concerning, and the statistics are increasing year after year. Victims of dating violence can be experienced by young men and women [16]. However, women have higher risk factors as victims of ADV [17]. This can be explained using feminist and developmental theory [15]. Arhuis-Inca *et al.* [18] analyzed 12,132 cases reported through Peru's special school violence system. As many as 86.4% of female students experienced sexual violence and 57.2% experienced psychological violence. Meanwhile, according to the annual records of the National Commission on Violence Against Women in Indonesia, the prevalence of physical and psychological violence in dating adolescents is still predominantly experienced by young women [16].

Violence is a public health problem that harms physical and mental health and has significant economic implications [18], [19]. Several ADV risk factors have been identified, for example, poor emotional management, weak parental supervision, witnessing violence in the family and the community, a history of childhood trauma, poverty, and low age of sexual debut [11], [20].

Many studies report violence among adolescents [11], [21], [22]. However, the limited literature reports on why adolescent females maintain their relationships during courtship, especially in Indonesia. Therefore, this study aims to examine the phenomenon of dating violence from the females' adolescent perspective.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Respondents and research procedures

This qualitative research method uses a case study approach [23]. The population in this study were students from a private university who had Boyfriends or had dated. The informants came from 10 females, five key informants (code I), and five triangular informants (code T). The informants' characteristics are summarized in Table 1. The sample in this study was taken using purposive sampling [24]. Inclusion criteria: i) adolescents aged 16-24 years old, ii) live in Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, iii) have a partner or have had a partner. Exclusion criteria are not willing to become an informant, canceling the interview agreement, the informant changed her mind after completing the interview. Previous research stated that female have a higher risk of experiencing dating violence. Therefore, female adolescents were selected as participants with the age range of adolescents determined by the Data and Information Center of the Indonesian Ministry of Health [25]. The researcher held a meeting to ensure that the informants met the criteria for participation. Researchers held several meetings to approach key informants. At the end of the study, informants were given appropriate compensation. Information from 10 informants was collected to look at saturation as a methodological principle in qualitative research [26]. This research has an ethics number, namely 012008030.

Table 1. Informants' characteristics

Informant	Code	Age (years)	Profession	Status of residence	Origin
Informant 1	I ₁	22	College Student	Parents house	Sleman
Informant 2	I ₂	22	College Student	Brother's house	Bantul
Informant 3	I ₃	21	College Student	Flat	Gunung kidul
Informant 4	I ₄	21	College Student	Parents house	Kulonprogo
Informant 5	I ₅	22	College Student	Parents house	Yogyakarta
Friend 1	T ₁	20	College Student	Parents house	Sleman
Friend 2	T ₂	21	College Student	Flat	Bantul
Friend 3	T ₃	21	College Student	Parents house	Gunung kidul
Friend 4	T ₄	22	College Student	Flat	Kulonprogo
Friend 5	T ₅	21	College Student	Parents house	Yogyakarta

2.2. Instrument

The instrument used is distinguished between the key informants and triangular informants. The instrument that was employed had been developed by previous researchers. It has been translated and its reliability validated. Key informants get 14 questions, while triangular informants get eight questions. Key informant questions consisted of definitions of dating violence, risk factors, forms of violence experienced, seeking help after experiencing dating violence, and collecting data in this study using in-depth interviews. The interview process lasted for 30-60 minutes. Before the interviews, informants and triangulans must fill out and sign an informed consent form. Researchers explain the purpose and objectives of the research, especially in the confidentiality of data obtained.

2.3. Data analysis

The researcher transcribed the results of each interview. This approach uses a phenomenological study approach. Phenomenological studies were used to ascertain the experiences of each key informant regarding dating violence. The qualitative data used is computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). This qualitative analysis is to identify the meaning and suitability of the method in conveying messages systematically and efficiently in presenting results [27]. The end of this analysis is the presentation by extraction and paraphrasing of existing statements.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Definition of dating violence

Experts categorize dating violence in terms that adolescents may not fully understand, such as emotional abuse in romantic relationships or rape, harassment, and various forms of sexual coercion [28]. For some informants, the focus on violence was in physical forms, such as slaps and punches. In comparison, other informants were more threatening and ridiculed with unpleasant names. Several informants explained the definition of violence as follows:

“Dating violence is like being beaten and hurt, isn’t it, sis?” (Informant I1)

While others said that “Violence is synonymous with feelings of pressure, being forced to do something, and pain in the heart.” (Informant I2)

“We will experience violence if we do not comply with what the partner wants.” (Informant I3)

“Violence is when there is coercion, for example, forced kissing or even to the point of being forced to have sexual intercourse.” (Informant I4 said)

Overall, adolescents' conceptualizations of dating violence are embedded in the terms they create [29]–[31]. Adolescents are more likely to use the type or form of dating violence than the definition or true meaning. Dating violence in adolescents is a severe and potentially deadly form of relationship among adolescents [28], [32]. Adolescents identify forms of dating violence, including destroying property and controlling a partner's finances [31].

3.2. Gender

In general, adolescents consider issues related to romantic relationships as the main problem of gender-based violence [30]. Several studies have shown that the relationship between the four parenting styles and psychosocial development in adolescents depends on the sex of the adolescents. For example, boys are more likely to experience disciplinary action and punishment than females [33]. We place women as people who are affected by dating violence. Several studies have also described women as victims of dating violence [34]–[36].

“As far as I know, women who are victims of dating violence are mostly women.” (Informant I1)

“It is the females who are the victims.” (Informant I3)

“If I hear from friends, the most victims are females, sis, but there are boys too.” (Informant I4)

“There are also females or boys who are victims, but there are more females, Sis.” (Informant I5)

Power dynamics based on sex and courtship relationships focus on the relevance of hostility and coercion to adolescent females, particularly those with intersectional identities who are most at risk for power-based violence [37], [38]. Many fights end in violence experienced by females [30], [39]. Boys who commit acts of violence have more self-esteem than those who do not [40]. However, it is not uncommon for boys to also become victims, but the research results are mostly among women [37], [39], [41], [42]. Boys are considered to cause conflict and have more violent behavior. Further analysis regarding violent behavior increases in late adolescence so that adolescents respond more aggressively to conflict, and most victims are females [43].

3.3. Relationship status

Adolescent females often choose to date because of their need for love, attention, and affection. One of the reasons for dating is to avoid criticism and ridicule in public or feel uncomfortable with being "single" [44]. The status of "single," the stigma that circulates among adolescents, leads to negative perceptions, is not attractive to the opposite sex, and is embarrassing. In addition, courtship ties are a place to get to know the opposite sex in a more serious direction.

"At our age, if we do not date, it means we do not sell well, we do not like the opposite sex, it means there is something wrong with us. it is very rare." (Informant I1)

"Now, at our age, we need more affection from the people we love (of the opposite sex) other than our parents. Well, we want to be pampered. We want to be loved by people we might consider the right people for our future later." (Informant I3)

The environment among adolescents trusts and considers dating a natural thing. Some adolescents indicate that courtship has positive impacts, such as motivating, entertaining, gaining status in the environment, and self-exploration as they reach adulthood [45]. So dating is common among Adolescent. Adolescent females think dating places dating relationships is the process of choosing a companion or life partner [44]. The violence that occurs in adolescents when dating cannot be ignored. This will be the forerunner of violence which will continue in the context of living together in marriage [46].

"So far, when we get together with other friends, if there are those who have not dated yet or do not have a partner, it is considered old-fashioned." (Friend, T₁, T₃, T₄)

"What I saw, during courtship I₂ was like a "Bucin" (love slave), that is how sis. Whatever her boyfriend tells her to do, she always obeys. Sometimes she gets scolded or yelled at, she just stays quiet." (Friend I₂)

"She (I₅) once told me that I want my current partner to be my future life partner." (Friend I₅)

The informant's friend clarified that the informant wanted a boyfriend who was now his future partner. So, informants tend to forgive all the treatment done to informants, including the violence committed.

"My Friend, I₁, often gets yelled at and scolded in public, sis, but she does not think it is a problem. They are getting better again." (Friend I₁)

"I have seen my friend (I₂) being pulled by his bag on the side of the road, scolded, living on the street, but the next day I saw that they were already pillion again." (Friend I₂)

"My friends are limited in their social interactions. If we are together and some boys join us, the boyfriend gets angry. Cannot join there. However, it is not a problem if the females gather together." (Friends I₄ and I₅)

An excessive form of control on a partner will also trigger restrictions on the association, thus triggering dating violence. Another form of control and conquest can be violence [44]. The forms of control from partners are very diverse, ranging from independence or freedom on the part of the woman's subjugation to dependence on power [47].

3.4. Forms of violence

Types of dating violence vary, ranging from physical, Psychological, and sexual violence [9]–[13]. Adolescents who experience violence will usually experience two types of violence. For example, adolescents who experience physical violence will also be accompanied by psychological violence [11]. Most women who have experienced physical or sexual violence have also experienced Psychological violence [48]. Physical violence includes hitting, pushing, slapping, pinching, throwing objects, and others [42], [48]. Forms of sexual violence include sexual exploitation, forced marriage, prostitution, sexual intimidation, rape, sex slavery, and others [49]. The consequences of physical violence include drug use, risky sexual behavior, and physical fighting. Most women who have experienced physical or sexual violence have also experienced psychological violence [36].

Informants I₂, I₄, and I₅ claimed to have experienced physical violence by being beaten, pinched, and pulled by their clothes, causing them to fall. Informant I₂ explained that a partner pulled her arm and squeezed it until it was red. Informant I₄ said that her partner once hit her when they fought. Meanwhile, I₅ explained that her partner pinched her arm until it turned blue, and she felt pain.

“He called me and pulled me by force, and then we ended up fighting. My arm was being pulled while squeezing.” (Informant I₂)

“He once hit me when we were fighting. Even though it was my boyfriend’s fault, I was the one who was beaten.” (Informant I₄)

“My boyfriend, when he is angry, he hits me, sis. He likes pinching until the part that is pinched turns blue.” (Informant I₅).

Psychological violence can be curbed, threatening, cynical, silent, humiliating, demeaning, isolating, glaring, and sneering [50], [51]. Psychological consequences include thoughts of anxiety, suicide, depression, excessive worry, anger, and disappointment [36]. Psychological violence was also experienced by I₁. She felt pressured when she was restricted from socializing and scolded in front of her friends. In the same way, I₂ said that if her partner made herself a place to vent her partner’s anger. Apart from that, she has also been verbally abused with unpleasant swear words.

“My boyfriend often limited me. However, I like hanging out with friends. Since I was dating my partner, I was limited in socializing.” (Informant I₁)

“Sometimes I get annoyed when he is angry and takes it out on me. I always cursed at him with much swearing.” (Informant I₂)

Psychological violence was found to be the most common type of violence experienced by dating adolescents [14], [15]. The impact experienced by victims is very influential in their daily lives.

4. CONCLUSION

Psychological, physical, and sexual violence is often experienced by adolescents female during dating relationships. Limited knowledge, power dynamics, misperceptions in relationships, and excessive expectations have placed females as victims of violence in dating relationships. In this study, adolescent females are willing to accept violence from their partner because they hope their current partner will become their life partner in the future. They do not realize that the violence that occurs during dating will become the seeds of violence when living in a household. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out education to fortify adolescents female from violence.

Research conducted using this qualitative approach has provided an overview and dynamics of violence experienced by young women as victims during dating. This study is still limited in reporting the dynamics of violence from the perspective of women as victims. However, of course, the results of this study are preliminary studies, and further studies are needed to make broader conclusions. Further studies from the point of view of men who are alleged to be perpetrators of dating violence need to be carried out to get an overview from 2 perspectives. Therefore, we recommend that future research focus on the male perspective. We also recommend that future research conduct prospective studies and consider other causal variables, reducing their reliance on correlational and cross-sectional investigative methods.

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