

QUALITY OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT

This research looks at how communication can help victims of abusive relationships maintain their relationships. The goal of this study is to first figure out how victims can stay in abusive relationships, and then to figure out how victims' experiences in abusive relationships are described. The notion of Interpersonal Communication and the theory of Relationship Maintenance were applied in this study. This research employed a phenomenological method and a qualitative approach with a constructivism paradigm. The information was gathered by interviews or in-depth interviews with four sources, and the results were assessed using the source triangulation data validity technique. The findings revealed that relationship violence can take many forms, including physical, emotional, sexual, and financial. During and after the occurrence of violence, abusive relationships tend to go through cycles. Even though they are in an abusive relationship, the perpetrator still engages in relationship maintenance behaviors such as giving praise, being open to each other, providing certainty in relationships, doing tasks together, and interacting with others, as stated in the relationship maintenance theory. Victims of abusive relationships have their own reasons for staying in abusive relationships, such as the fact that they have been in an abusive relationship for a long time, still love them, and are frightened to leave.

INTRODUCTION

Abusive relationship may not be a foreign word for those who have romantic relationships, especially for those who are

still in the transition phase from adolescence to adulthood where they are still looking for identity and have unstable emotions. Although so far we have seen that many of

the victims are women, it is also possible for men to get violent treatment from their partners. Disputes or differences of opinion in a relationship are normal things to happen, but resorting to violence in solving problems is not the solution (Kurniawan et al., 2020). In an effective interpersonal communication relationship it is very important to reduce the occurrence of misunderstandings and find a way out to solve a problem.

In the Annual Records (CATAHU) of the National Commission on Violence Against Women, there were 299,911 cases of violence against women in 2020. There were 6,480 cases in the personal domain, including 3,221 cases of violence against wives, 1,309 cases of dating, and violence against girls. 954 cases. Violence in dating occupies the second highest position after violence against wives (CATAHU 2020 Komnas Perempuan, 2021). Dating violence is all forms of violence that can take the form of physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, and financial violence (Anggreini & Nugroho, 2022).

According to Michael J. Formica in an article in *Psychology Today*, abusive relationships are relationships that are lived with fear, and the emergence of feelings of insecurity. Perpetrators of abusive relationships feel that they have a bad social sense, and try to get that value by dominating and controlling their partner. The fears that give rise to these feelings of insecurity are the fear of not being loved and the fear of appearing weak. In reality, the perpetrator is actually weak, therefore the perpetrator tries to always control his partner in a relationship (Formica, 2008).

Communication is an activity to convey ideas, opinions, thoughts, and ideas from one person to another (Purba et al., 2020). Harold D. Laswell, who defines communication as "who says what to whom in which channel with what effect". (Rustan & Hakki, 2017). According to Joseph A. Devito, interpersonal communication is the process of sending and receiving messages between two people, or between a small

group of people with some immediate feedback. In interpersonal communication there are several important elements or elements, namely: (1) source-receiver, (2) message, (3) encoding-decoding, (4) media, (5) interference, (6) feedback, (7) context, (8) ethics (Patriana, 2014).

Sugerman defines dating violence as behavior that threatens and tortures his partner who is still in a dating relationship and is not married (Sekarlina, 2013). Abusive relationships have several types, namely: (1) physical abuse, such as hitting, kicking, pushing, (2) sexual abuse, forcing a partner to do something sexually for their own satisfaction, (3) emotional abuse, the perpetrator threatens or insults, overprotective, controlling excessively, (4) financial abuse, the perpetrator manages all financial activities of the victim or even forces the victim to buy whatever the perpetrator wants (Cynthia Astari & Sentosa, 2019).

This dating violence can arise because it is triggered by several factors, while these factors include: (1) inability to regulate emotions, (2) excessive jealousy, (3) excessive dependence on partners (Owena, 2020). In abusive relationships, there are cycles that often occur during and after the occurrence of violence in the relationship itself, namely: (1) tension building, in this phase there is tension, pressure, and chaos in the relationship and the victim is still able to overcome this problem, (2) acute battering incident, a phase that has increased from the tension building phase, until one of the dominant parties explodes and begins to commit violence against the victim, (3) loving-contrition, a phase where tension, pressure and chaos begin to decrease. The perpetrator will feel sorry and affectionate so that it makes the victim feel that the perpetrator will not repeat the incident again. It is necessary for the victim to know that the phases that occurred above will continue to occur repeatedly if both parties always resolve the existing problem in the same way. (Owena, 2020).

Homans (1961) in Cook et al. (2013) explained that individual behavior is the dominant actor in interactions with each other. Homans also explained that everything that appears in a social group can be explained by the position of the individual as the individual himself. So that the premise is also carried over in its definition in explaining the theory of social exchange. This theory of social exchange also discusses how the formation of a relationship that starts from the interaction between individuals. This theory also reveals whether or not a relationship continues by observing the existence of alternatives that are often compared in it. There are four basic concepts in social exchange theory, namely: (1) *reward*, is one element in the relationship which is positive values. Rewards are relative, so changes often occur over time, (2) *cost*, is one element that is identical to negative values. The costs in a relationship can be money, time, effort, conflict, self-esteem collapse, or anxiety. Costs are also relative, so they can change according to people and time, (3) *result*, the results here are identical with the tendency of people to maximize the rewards or rewards obtained by minimizing the costs or costs incurred, (4) *the level of comparison*, in In a relationship, the degree of comparison becomes a standard used to evaluate the output of a communication situation. There are two types of comparison: (a) *level of comparison evaluation*, a representation of what others feel, is accepted as a form of reward and cost of a relationship, (b) *level of comparison of alternatives*, refers to the lowest level of reward a relationship that will be received by a person. by providing alternative costs available from multiple relationships or being alone (Ningsih, 2020).

Schoebi, Pagani, Luginbuehl, & Bradbury (2015) state that relationship maintenance is behavior that maintains positive relationship qualities such as satisfaction, intimacy, and love (prevention goals), and attempts to repair and strengthen vulnerable relationships (intervention goals) (Ogolsky & Monk,

2020). Canary and Stafford (1991) state that there are five behaviors that include relationship maintenance strategies, namely: (1) positivity, the attitude of making pleasant interactions or giving praise, (2) openness, talking and listening to each other, opening up and exchanging thoughts, (3) assurance, the attitude of providing certainty or assurance about commitment in the relationship, (4) Sharing tasks, the attitude of doing tasks and work that are relevant in a relationship together, (5) social networks, the attitude of spending time to communicate and get acquainted with people around friends (Widya, 2014).

In a romantic relationship that exists between a man and a woman, there must be interpersonal communication between the two. Good communication is the key to a healthy relationship in order to understand each other's goals and intentions. With the high number of complaints of violence against women in dating relationships as recorded in Komnas Perempuan, the author feels that this is something that needs to be investigated how victims can maintain their relationships even though they are victims of abusive relationships. Based on the understanding described above, the purpose of this study is to find out how victims can maintain abusive relationships, and understand how the experiences of victims in abusive relationships describe.

METHOD

This study used descriptive qualitative method. The object of this research is how victims of abusive relationships can maintain their relationship with interpersonal communication and relationship maintenance theory. The subjects of this study were several individuals who had or are still undergoing and are in an abusive relationship. The data collection method used in this research is interview or in-depth interview (Yin, 2018). The qualitative data analysis techniques used in this study were: (1) data collection before, during, and after the study. The data collection is related to cases and

communication in couples who undergo abusive relationships, (2) data presentation is done by presenting the required and relevant data, then presented in the form of narrative text, (3) drawing conclusions from the data that has been collected. presented

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Interpersonal Communication

Effective communication requires confidence between the communicator and the communicant so that they feel comfortable when communicating and the other person is brave to open the conversation. Confidence in communicating is related to the intonation of the voice when the individual interacts. This illustrates the interest and attention of both parties, if one party does not show a response it will give the impression that there is no attention from the other party. (Sarwono & Meinarno, 2014).

The researcher found that two out of four interviewees had effective interpersonal communication in accordance with (Sarwono & Meinarno, 2014) statement in their journal which said that effective communication requires confidence between the communicator and the communicant so that they feel comfortable when communicating and the other person dares to open the conversation. This means that according to the testimonies of LS and DA, they already trust and are comfortable with their partners so that they can communicate well and effectively. But this is inversely proportional to IT and YF, where they do not feel comfortable expressing their feelings to their partners because they are afraid of their partner's response, this causes communication between them and their partners to not work well. From the explanations of each of these resource persons, if it is associated with the concept of comparative level in social exchange theory, it can be said that LS and DA have made communication as a medium for delivering comparative evaluation levels. This is because by communicating LS and DA can represent what they feel about the

as research results. Conclusions related to interpersonal communication in couples undergoing abusive relationships (Creswell, 2017).

relationship they are in with the aim of gaining understanding with each other. Meanwhile, in the case of IT and YF, the conditions used refer to the concept of an alternative level of comparison, where communicating with their partner can actually result in a higher cost of the relationship.

Social Exchange Theory

Homans (1961) in Cook et al. (2013) explained that individual behavior is the dominant actor in interactions with each other. Homans also explained that everything that appears in a social group can be explained by the position of the individual as the individual himself. So that the premise is also carried over in his definition in explaining the theory of social exchange. According to him, social exchange is an exchange of activities, tangible or intangible, and more or less rewarding or expensive between at least two parties involved (Homans, 1961 in Cook et al., 2013). Based on this explanation, Homans simplifies a complex thing into a simple one in which the relationship that exists is influenced by the behavior of each individual alone without any other influence either from the environment or other social aspects.

Based on the results of interviews with several sources, the violence that a person receives for the behavior of his partner is caused by something that stimulates the person to justify abusive actions. Based on the background explained by the informants regarding indications of what factors underlie a person's abusive actions towards their partner, it can be said that everyone has a different background in forming reasons for abusive behavior towards their partner. If viewed based on the theory of social exchange, the experience of each resource person is in accordance

with the explanation put forward by Blau (1964) in Cook et al. (2013), where abusive behavior carried out by their partners is indicated to be influenced and motivated by what they have received from other people. Like LS and DA who explained that their partners had traumatic experiences received from previous relationships, while YF explained their indications that their partner's violence was influenced by experiences received from their parents, and IT explained that their partners considered him the only one, closest person and deserves to accept any behavior on the basis of proximity. If examined more deeply, each background that underlies a person's abusive behavior is likely to be influenced by the environment or other people. This finding seems to refute the statement of Homans (1961) in Cook et al. (2013) which states that social exchange theory is formed on the simplification of a complex thing, or in other words the behavior shown by an individual has the possibility of being influenced by other social aspects besides the individual himself, such as the environment or the behavior of other people (Cook et al., 2013).

Some people who have experienced bad experiences in the past have a tendency to be motivated to bring these negative values into their relationships, including their partners. This is one of the things that underlies the cost in a relationship to be greater than it should be, even though in the theory of social exchange in the relationship that is lived it is necessary to maximize the rewards received by each party and minimize the costs that must be borne by one or both parties involved. So that in the end it will produce output that is less in line with the expectations of each individual in the relationship and if it is drawn to a level of comparison, the output can be said to be outside the standard.

In an effort to overcome the problems faced or in this case an abusive relationship, most of the interviewees chose not to be involved in the relationship anymore. Like IT, DA, and YF who decided to take the

courage to declare a break from their partner as a solution to overcome the abusive relationship they were in. The decisions taken by IT, DA, and YF are based on receiving the lowest reward for the relationship they are in so that the choice taken is another alternative that minimizes the cost of the relationship. Because the only thing that strengthens them to survive is the age of the relationship that is already long. Meanwhile, LS chooses to stay with her partner with an abusive relationship condition that is more controlled and can be evaluated based on her experience in the relationship. When referring to social exchange theory, the motives taken by LS in overcoming abusive relationships refer to the concept of comparative evaluation level which still has the opportunity to represent his feelings towards his partner which is then accepted as a reward or cost for his partner. While IT, DA, and YF have smaller opportunities to communicate the problems they are experiencing, so the motives they take in overcoming abusive relationships tend to refer to the concept of alternative comparison levels due to the very low reward they receive for their relationship and the solution they choose is for yourself (break up).

Relationship Maintenance Theory

LS stated that during her relationship, communication between LS and her partner went smoothly and effectively, they had been open to each other and often exchanged ideas with each other. They are also open to each other about the past and the background of their respective families. This is also in accordance with the relationship maintenance theory in a journal written by (Miapistia, 2017), in her journal that it is written that one of the behaviors to maintain relationships is openness or openness. Where in a relationship can talk and listen to each other, open up to each other and exchange ideas.

Likewise with DA's resource person, DA stated that communication between him and his partner went very well, DA and his

partner always tried to solve problems by meeting face to face to avoid misunderstandings between them. They are also open to each other, past, background, and the feelings they are feeling. Neither of them prohibits each other excessively or possessively. This is also in accordance with one of the behaviors that can be done to maintain relationships in the journal written by (Miapistia, 2017), namely social networks or the attitude of spending time to communicate and get acquainted with people around.

In contrast to IT sources, IT feels that during a relationship with his ex-partner he feels less comfortable to express his opinion or express his feelings. This is contrary to the statement (Sarwono & Meinarno, 2014) which writes that to communicate effectively, it takes a sense of comfort between the communicator and the communicant. This was also felt by YF's informant, YF stated that the communication that took place between YF and his partner only took place in one direction, YF only followed the wishes of his partner to avoid conflict. This is also in accordance with the statement (Cynthia Astari & Sentosa, 2019) in their journal stating that one of the tendencies of abusive relationships is that the relationship must run according to the rules of the perpetrator of violence. Here the researcher concludes that the communication that takes place between IT and YF resource persons with their respective partners is not effective, because the informants feel uncomfortable communicating with their partners.

CONCLUSION

In maintaining their relationship, both victims and perpetrators in abusive relationships maintain their relationship through interpersonal communication and the behaviors mentioned in relationship maintenance theory, namely positivity, openness, assurance, sharing tasks, and social networks. Interpersonal communication that occurs between victims and perpetrators is not always effective, in

communication that is related to violence in relationships does not produce a positive effect. An alternative path that can be taken is to end the relationship, this is based on the low reward of the partner. Even though they have tried to talk about the harsh treatment of the perpetrators, the perpetrators continue to repeat the violence that occurred. In the end, the reasons for the victim to persist include having been in a relationship for a long time, still in love, and being threatened by the perpetrator.

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