



Why Do Women Maintain Abusive Dating Relationship?

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ABSTRACT

Dating violence, often referred to as abusive dating relationships, is characterized by a pattern of abusive behavior that persists over time, wherein individuals exert their power to manipulate and control their partners. The numerous negative consequences stemming from abusive dating relationships should serve as a compelling reason for women, who are often victims of dating violence, to swiftly decide to leave such relationships. However, the decision to remain in these relationships can be influenced by various factors that weigh heavily on each woman's ability to leave her partner. The research process explores a related case by involving various data sources to understand well and know intrinsically about the regularity and specificity in cases related to decision-making in women who undergo abusive dating relationships.

Keywords: decision making, women, abusive dating relationship

Introduction

It is human nature to seek love and closeness with others, especially during late adolescence and early adulthood, a period characterized by self-exploration, such as in love and personal achievement (Erikson, 1982). One of Erikson's stages of human development is intimacy versus isolation. According to Erikson, individuals aged 20-40 years have a desire to form intimate relationships, maintain those relationships, and express affection for people they consider important (Maree, 2021). Early adult development is marked by efforts to increase independence from a partner, build intimacy, and develop commitments in friendships (Santrock, 2010). Dating relationships can serve as a means of gaining social support, affection, shared interests, and learning to make compromises and cooperate. Therefore, dating is viewed as a way to learn how to form deeper and more intimate relationships (Furman & Collibee, 2019). Dating violence, often referred to as abusive dating relationships, involves a pattern of behavior in which individuals use power to manipulate and control their partners through sustained abusive behaviors (Bella, 2020). Data from 2016 on women in Indonesia revealed that one in three women aged 15-64 years experienced violence in relationships (Statistics, 2017). Abusive dating relationships include not only physical abuse, such as hitting, but also emotional abuse, such as insults or demeaning comments aimed at lowering a partner's self-esteem, as well as sexual abuse, where individuals are forced into sexual relations (Shorey et al., 2012).

According to data from 2019, dating violence ranked as the third most common form of violence in private spheres, with 1,819 cases reported, following violence against girls and violence against wives (Komnas Perempuan, 2020). Violence against women can be caused by various factors, including low education levels, patriarchal beliefs, temperamental nature, women's aggressive behavior, or a history of prior abuse (KemenPPPA Republik Indonesia, 2018). Additional factors include jealousy, lack of attention, disobedience, and financial pressures (Basile et al., 2014). On the perpetrator's side, those who have experienced violence within their families often come to view violence as a problem-solving strategy (Dodge et al., 1994). Abuse in dating relationships can have severe negative impacts on victims. These include mental health issues, such as suicidal ideation, psychosomatic conditions, and physical effects like substance abuse and engagement in dangerous criminal activities (Park et al., 2018). Psychological impacts include stress, depression, trauma, and impaired functioning, while physical impacts include bruising, abrasions, and broken bones. Victims may also experience social consequences, such as excessive control over their appearance, social interactions, and work imposed by their abusive partners (Ferriani et al., 2019).

The profound negative consequences of abusive dating relationships should prompt women, who are victims of dating violence, to end these relationships as quickly as possible. However, the decision to remain in these relationships can be influenced by various factors, making it difficult for women to leave. Romantic relationships are often considered a way to enhance psychological well-being and develop positive interpersonal relationships. However, abusive dating relationships can lead to PTSD, dissociation, and low life satisfaction for the victims (Gómez, 2019). Women may remain in abusive dating relationships due to various considerations. Preliminary studies show that reasons for staying include the belief that their partner is inherently good, not wanting to burden their partner, emotional attachment, fear of being rejected by others, economic dependence, and feelings of helplessness (Janis & Mann, 1987). These reasons motivate women to continue enduring abusive dating relationships, which underscores the importance of further research into decision-making processes among women in such situations. Dating relationships involve two individuals establishing an intimate connection, despite the potential for internal and external problems (Hardesty & Ogolsky, 2020). These relationships may have

negative effects, including violence, which can take the form of physical, psychological, sexual, or financial abuse by one partner against the other (Mechanic et al., 2008). Various forms of dating violence include physical violence (e.g., hitting, pushing), verbal violence (e.g., shouting, insults), psychological/emotional abuse (e.g., threats, body shaming), financial abuse (e.g., exploiting material resources), and restrictive violence (e.g., possessiveness, excessive control) (KemenPPPA, 2018).

Several factors contribute to dating violence, including individual characteristics, family and friendship environments, family dynamics, societal norms, and education levels (Rusyidi & Hidayat, 2020). The impacts of dating violence are wide-ranging and include psychological issues, such as stress, depression, trauma, and suicidal ideation, as well as physical effects, such as bruising and broken bones, and social consequences, such as social withdrawal and disruption of work and relationships (Sintyasari & Fridari, 2021). Victims may either choose to end their relationship due to these unhealthy dynamics or continue to endure it for personal reasons. Decision-making is the process of selecting the best solution to a problem from various alternatives (Janis & Mann, 1987). It typically involves considering several options and is influenced by factors like age and cognitive development. Emerging adulthood, defined as ages 18-25, is a period where individuals explore romantic relationships and careers (Santrock, 2010). Early adulthood is also marked by a search for personal identity, emotional connection, and life commitments, all of which can create tension. Early adults form relationships to satisfy their need for affection, and as they explore romantic relationships, they are faced with decisions about committing to and maintaining a partner.

Methods

The research approach utilized is a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach is a research procedure aimed at generating descriptive data, whether written, spoken, or based on observed behavior (Creswell, 2013). This approach is employed because it involves more detailed data collection methods, such as interviews, observations, and document analysis. Additionally, qualitative approaches provide the ability to explain phenomena holistically, taking into account the social, cultural, and historical contexts that shape them. This allows researchers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study. Moreover, qualitative research can explore participants' views and perspectives, enabling researchers to understand how participants interpret and experience these phenomena. The research method used in this study is a case study. A case study research design is a process that explores a bounded case by involving various data sources to thoroughly understand the regularities and specific characteristics of a particular case (Creswell, 2013).

Participants

The research subjects were determined using a purposive sampling technique, where the sample is selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2016). Data were collected from 10 participants and five significant others. The criteria for the study subjects were: (1) women aged 18–25 years, (2) in a dating relationship for more than two years, (3) having experienced dating violence, and (4) residing in the city of Malang.

Data Collection

There are six sources of data collection: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical devices. The case study research process involves conducting a theoretical or conceptual development study to identify the case and then designing a data collection protocol (Creswell, 2013). At least ten people and five significant others were interviewed to triangulate the data. Data collection in this study included interviews and direct field observations. The interview guidelines were prepared in advance but could be adjusted based on field conditions and situations. Additionally, a recording device was used to record the interview process, which was subsequently transcribed verbatim. Direct observation was conducted by assessing the participants' current conditions while they were engaged in unhealthy or abusive relationships. Researchers employed both interview and observation techniques to evaluate the relationship between participants' statements and the conditions observed in the field.

Research Procedure

The research procedure began with the initial participant and continued until data were collected from the tenth participant. Prior to data collection, the researchers prepared all necessary methods and documents, including interview guides and informed consent forms. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, who agreed to maintain the confidentiality of their identity. Additionally, the researcher scheduled appointments with participants before securing informed consent. We conducted semi-structured interviews subsequently, utilizing a flexible list of questions in our research report. The interviewer conducted in-depth interviews to obtain comprehensive answers. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, utilizing a flexible list of questions as outlined in the research report. The interviewer carried out in-depth interviews to obtain comprehensive responses.

Data Analysis

The data analysis Analysis Method with Miles and Huberman introduced three stages in analyzing data, such as: 1) Data Reduction : The first stage in conducting qualitative data analysis is data reduction. In this case, the researcher simplifies the existing data to become a simple information collection

that suits the research needs. Researchers group them into categories of data that are important and not. 2) Presentation of Data : After the reduction stage, the researcher presented the data (data display). 3) Drawing conclusions : The next stage in the data analysis method is conclusion drawing. When the data arrangement has been presented, the researcher can make conclusions that will be the closing information in the research report.

Finding and Discussion

Dating relationships go through various phases, such as the introduction phase, getting closer, and eventually reaching an agreement to enter into a relationship. However, it does not guarantee that dating relationships always go as expected. Based on the interview results with the subjects, various forms of violence were found, including verbal, physical, psychological, social, and economic. These acts of violence undoubtedly have an impact on the victims.

Based on the interviews with the subjects, they experienced the following impacts of violence: decreased self-confidence, fear, anxiety, worry, physical injuries, and generalizing negative views about men. Nevertheless, many individuals choose to stay in their relationships despite experiencing violence. There are several factors underlying the victims' decision to stay in their dating relationships. This is closely related to how they make their decisions to continue. Individuals have their reasons for deciding to stay. Based on the research, it is evident that individuals have various reasons for staying in relationships based on their learning experiences in relationships. These reasons include *"witing tresno jalaran soko kulino"* or love grows because there is a habit, *"eman-eman"* unfortunately, *"karma"*, hope to change, commitment, manipulation and control, dependency, comfort, and a sense of responsibility toward the relationship.

Discussion:

"Witing tresno jalaran soko kulino" or love grows because there is a habit

This term is an expression in Javanese language that signifies love due to familiarity. In this expression, "witing" means beginning, "tresno" means love, "jalaran" means because or as a result of, "soko" means source or cause, and "kulino" means familiarity. This expression conveys the understanding that the existence of love is not always explainable logically or rationally, but it occurs because of familiarity with someone. It reflects the traditional Javanese belief in the role of frequent interaction in matters of love and human relationships :

"Yeah, it's called love, sis, you can't explain it. Oh, you know, in Javanese, there's a term called 'witing tresno jalaran soko kulino.' The more time we spend together, love just grows naturally, maybe it's from there. "

"Eman-eman" or unfortunately

The expression "eman-eman" is a term in Javanese language that carries a broad meaning related to a sense of regret, fear of futility, and expressing remorse.^[10] Thus, the expression "eman-eman" is seen as a subjective feeling that can only be felt by the subject. Therefore, in interpreting "eman-eman," it cannot be standardized for every individual, especially regarding how they feel about enduring a violent relationship.:

"And my parents already know about him, sis. His parents and family, to be precise, already know that we are in a relationship. It's like 'eman' you know, like if we were to separate halfway. We've been serious, we've been through a lot together. So, we support each other."

Karma

Karma is an expression of the consequences or retribution for one's actions.^[11] The subject states that they are avoiding the karma that may occur due to their mother's disregard for their father's issues. As a result, the subject is maintaining the relationship even though their partner is engaging in violence. Despite the partner's violence, it is justified by their claim of suppressing emotions due to their own family issues at home.

"Yeah, I'm afraid that this might become karma, you know. It's my mother's karma for not caring about my father's family matters, to the point where my father had to handle everything on his own, and in the end, he feels unsupported by both my mother and his own family."

Hope to Change

There is a hope that the abusive partner can change. This hope is expressed as an effort to sustain the relationship.^[12] The hope is in the belief that their partner's abusive behavior will change someday. They have optimistic thoughts and always forgive their partner's repeated actions.

"Hope is that he will change, you know. He can change because he wasn't like that before, I believe that."

"He actually pleaded with me, you know, and I melted and hoped, because he promised not to repeat his actions again."

Commitment

The subject has a commitment to their relationship due to factors such as pre-relationship agreements, investment in the relationship, and the determination to maintain the relationship in the face of challenges.^[13] This commitment shapes the subject's decision to remain in the relationship.

I've started feeling that this relationship is unhealthy, but I'm still optimistic that we can get through this, that it will be better in the future. We can understand each other even more, and I also have a principle that getting to know each other is a lifelong process. We continue to learn about our partner throughout our lives."

Manipulation and Control

The "Manipulation and Control" from the partner plays a significant role in influencing the decision-making of dating violence victims.^[14] The subjects are influenced by verbal abuse from their partners, who consistently demean them by saying that no one likes them except their partner. Despite experiencing various forms of violence from their partners, the subjects still feel emotionally attached to them. This thought pattern is influenced by their partners' emotional manipulation, leading them to believe that their partners' actions of frequently hurting them by throwing objects can still be justified. The subjects continue to believe that their partners love them, and therefore, their partners will not physically harm them.

"Yes, I want to stay because I really love him, and maybe I've been indoctrinated by what he said to me."

The thought error induced by the subject, due to emotional manipulation from their partner, makes them believe that their partner's actions of frequently hurting them by throwing objects can still be justified. The subject continues to believe that their partner loves them, thus their partner wouldn't physically harm them. This aligns with the specific statement made by the subject during the interview, as follows:

"I just can't bring myself to leave him, sis, especially not being with him. I don't think I can do it yet. Besides, he hasn't crossed the line of physically hurting me or hitting me."

Feeling Comfortable

Feeling comfortable is also one of the factors influencing an individual's decision-making to stay in their relationship.^[15] This is expressed by the subject due to the fulfillment of their needs that they receive from their partner, as mentioned during the interview, as follows:

"From the beginning of starting a business with him, I've been helping him, and vice versa. I really love him because he's the one who makes me feel comfortable with him. He treats me like a princess, like his queen, you know, sis. I feel loved by him, even though I know maybe he doesn't feel the same way about me entirely"

Feeling Dependent

The feeling of dependence is also a reason underlying the victim's decision to stay in the relationship.^[16] The subject feels dependent on their partner because they feel alone and have no friends other than their partner. They feel they can rely on their partner no matter what happens. Furthermore, they also experience a sense of dependence as victims of dating violence. The feeling of dependence arises because they feel alone and have no friends other than their partner. The subject also states that they can rely on their partner no matter what happens.

"I feel torn, sis. I really love him, he's the one who fills my emptiness, he completes me."

The feeling of dependence is partly caused by their partner who always accompanies them when they are outside the home. The continuous routines they engage in together create a fear of being alone and generate a sense of dependence on their partner.:

"I'm scared, sis. Basically, everything I do is with him, everything I experience for the first time is with him. I'm afraid that other people won't accept me because I've already done everything with him. Moreover, I'm already comfortable with him, I can rely on him. He takes me everywhere, and he can make me very happy too."

Fear of Taking Risks

The subjects also mentioned the difficulty of ending their relationship, one of which was due to rejection from their partner.^[17] As a result, they find it challenging to break free from the relationship with their partner. Additionally, they also have concerns that their partner might genuinely disrupt their life and well-being if the relationship were to end.

"So, even if I want to enter a new relationship later on, I'm afraid that he will still be snooping around, you know, following me or interfering... it might disrupt my new relationship, that's what I'm worried about."

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the various factors that influence individuals' decisions to stay in abusive dating relationships. The research participants experienced different forms of violence, including verbal, physical, psychological, social, and economic abuse, which had significant impacts on their well-being. Despite these adverse effects, many individuals choose to stay in their relationships due to a combination of cultural beliefs, emotional attachment, hope for change in their partner, commitment, manipulation and control by their partner, dependency on their partner, feeling comfortable with their partner, and fear of the potential consequences of ending the relationship.

The cultural belief of "*witing tresno jalaran soko kulino*" emphasizes the significance of frequent interaction leading to love and attachment in Javanese culture. The concept of "*eman-eman*" reflects the subjective feelings of regret and remorse that may influence a person's decision to endure a violent relationship. "*Karma*" plays a role for some individuals, where they fear facing consequences for their past actions if they were to leave the

relationship. Hope for change is a significant factor for some victims, as they believe their partner's abusive behavior can be transformed. Commitment to the relationship, driven by pre-relationship agreements, emotional investment, and determination, also plays a vital role in their decision to stay.

Manipulation and control by the abusive partner create a psychological impact on the victims, making them believe that the partner's actions are still justified and that their partner truly loves them. This results in emotional attachment and difficulty in breaking free from the relationship. Feeling comfortable with their partner due to the fulfillment of their needs further reinforces the victims' decision to remain in the relationship. Additionally, the feeling of dependence on the partner, arising from spending continuous time together, contributes to their fear of being alone and strengthens their emotional bond.

Finally, fear of taking risks and concerns about potential disruptions to their life and well-being after ending the relationship also deter some victims from leaving. Overall, this study sheds light on the complex and multi-faceted reasons behind why women maintain abusive dating relationships, providing valuable insights for understanding and addressing this issue in society.

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