

Self-esteem and Resilience Among Students Affected by Toxic Relationships

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Abstrack

The research aims to determine the levels of self-esteem and resilience among university students who are victims of toxic relationships throughout Indonesia. This study is of a quantitative nature. The research subjects consisted of 207 students who have experienced toxic relationships. Subjects were asked to fill out an Informed Consent form as part of the research protocol. The results indicate that self-esteem is not high in cases of toxic relationships; instead, it negatively affects resilience in students involved in toxic relationships. The conclusion of the study is that the hypothesis is rejected, meaning there is no relationship between self-esteem and resilience.

Keywords: self-esteem, resilience, university students who are victims of toxic relationship

Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian yaitu mengetahui tingkat harga diri dan resiliensi pada mahasiswa korban toxic relationship diseluruh indonesia. Jenis penelitian ini yaitu penelitian kuantitatif. Subjek penelitian sebanyak 207 mahasiswa yang pernah menjalin toxic relationship. Subjek diminta mengisi Informed Consent sebagai bagian dari protokol penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa harga diri tidak bertingkat tinggi di kasus toxic relationship, melainkan berpengaruh negatif terhadap ketahanan pada mahasiswa yang terlibat dalam toxic relationship. Kesimpulan dalam penelitian bahwa hipotesis ditolak, yang artinya tidak terdapat hubungan antara harga diri dengan resiliensi.

Keywords: harga diri, resiliensi, college student victim of toxic relationship

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INTRODUCTION

According to data released by the Ministry of Education and Culture's Higher Education Statistics in 2020, the age of university students generally falls within the range of 18 to 24 years old. The transition stage from adolescence to adulthood, known as Emerging Adulthood, occurs within the age range of 18 to 25 years old according to research by Santrock in 2019. During this period, individuals often experience phases of identity exploration and instability, particularly in areas such as love, work, and education, as described by (Layland et al, 2018; Santrock, 2019). Emerging adulthood is characterized not only by increased support but also by increased negative interactions, control, and jealousy in romantic relationships, as found in research by (Lantagne et al, 2017; Santrock, 2019). Students naturally expect healthy and satisfying romantic relationships as they enter the adult phase.

However, there are situations where students become involved in unhealthy dating relationships, which can cause discomfort for one or both partners or even lead to violent behavior. The term "toxic relationship" refers to a relationship where one partner engages in "toxic" behaviors that disrupt and potentially harm the physical and mental health of the individual, as described by (Supriyanti, 2023). In the context of toxic relationships, damaging behaviors may include one-way communication, excessive possessiveness, an overwhelming need to know every detail about the partner, hindering healthy growth, as well as causing discomfort, selfishness, dominance, insecurity, excessive jealousy, insults, harsh criticism, and even physical and psychological violence against the partner (Saraswati, 2019; Wulandari et al, 2021).

In its latest annual report, the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) in 2022 noted that out of a total of 457,895 reported cases of violence during that year, some of them were related to dating violence (CATAHU Komnas Perempuan, 2022). Additionally, the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia reported that out of a total of 3,622 cases of violence, with 3,172 female victims aged 18-24 years (representing 13.2%) and 794 male victims aged 18-24 years (representing 8.4%), some of them were also related to dating relationships (SIMFONI-PPA, 2024).

The effects of toxic relationships cause the informants to experience fear, difficulty in self-expression, low self-esteem, emotional pain, and discomfort in relationships as well as with themselves. Although the informants have ended the toxic relationships at the time of the interview, they are still affected by the traumatic experiences. This makes them reluctant to seek new partners due to fear, difficulty trusting others again, and the traumatic experience from previous romantic relationships. The difficulty in overcoming fear and trauma from previous toxic relationships highlights the importance for students who are victims to develop the resilience needed to address these psychological impacts (Parinsi, 2022).

Resilience refers to the quality possessed by individuals, in this case, students, that enables them to grow and overcome challenges they face (Connor & Davidson, 2003). There are two perspectives on resilience. First, how an individual, including students, who have experienced negative experiences in the form of toxic relationships, not only recover but also learn from it and develop into better individuals. Second, how individuals, such as students in this example, are still able to endure and recover even after experiencing potentially traumatic experiences (Sunbul & Gordesli, 2020).

There are five interacting factors that shape resilience. First is the combination of personal competence, high standards, and perseverance. Second is reliance on



individual intuition or instincts, tolerance for side effects, and reinforcement from stress. Third is acceptance of positive change and forming intimate bonds with others. Fourth is a sense of control. And fifth is spirituality (Connor & Davidson, 2003). A student with low resilience may face difficulty in managing their emotions, feel restless, lack confidence in their future, feel trapped in their problems or history, and be unable to recover from the negative impacts of past toxic relationships. Conversely, a student with high resilience will be able to manage their emotions, remain optimistic about their future, face challenges calmly, have confidence in their ability to solve problems, and recover from the damaging effects of have confidence in their ability to solve problems, and recover from the damaging effects of past toxic relationships (Muharrara, 2018).

According to Barankin and Khanlou (Harning, 2018), resilience is influenced by two variables: risk factors and protective factors. Protective factors, consisting of internal and external components, play a crucial role in building resilience. These internal components are the capacities possessed by individuals. In the context of being victims of toxic relationships, students need to rely on their internal qualities to demonstrate resilience. One important internal characteristic for students in developing resilience is compassion, which is the ability to care for oneself and holds significant value in the recovery process (Rananto & Hidayati, 2017).

Self-esteem is the result of self-evaluation that is expressed in one's attitude towards oneself. This evaluation reveals an attitude of acceptance or rejection and can also indicate how much an individual can trust themselves and acknowledge that they are capable, meaningful, successful, and valuable according to their own standards and personal judgments (Murk, 2013). Self-esteem is the most important factor in shaping someone who has been a victim of their toxic relationship to be more optimistic, proud, and satisfied with themselves, more sensitive to their abilities or capabilities, ignoring negative feedback and seeking feedback about their abilities; accepting what they have experienced negative events and striving to improve them; experiencing positive emotions more often (joy, happiness); flexible, brave, more capable of expressing themselves in relationships with others (spontaneous and active); trying to do something to improve their capacity to grow and develop more; taking risks; having a positive attitude towards others, groups, or institutions; thinking constructively and flexibly; able to make decisions quickly and feel confident in the decisions they make (Savitri, 2022).

According to a study conducted by Savitri et al. (2022), it was found that there is a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and resilience. Self-esteem was identified as a predictor for the level of resilience. The results of this study indicate that there is a relationship between self-esteem and resilience, suggesting that self-esteem influences the level of resilience. The results of hypothesis testing show that the significance value (2-tailed) is ($0.00 \leq 0.05$), indicating a significant relationship between self-esteem and resilience, with a correlation coefficient of .683 indicating a positive correlation. This indicates that the higher the self-esteem, the higher the level of resilience. The aim of this study is to evaluate the relationship between self-esteem and resilience among students who have experienced toxic relationships. The hypothesis proposed is that there is a positive relationship between self-esteem and resilience among students who are victims of toxic relationships.

The research indicates that high self-esteem and resilience are associated with students' ability to handle the toxicity within toxic relationships. The author wishes to add novelty to the research by demonstrating that students who feel connected to toxic relationships present with high resilience, enabling them to endure and adapt to difficult



situations (Parinsi, 2022). Additionally, the author also wants to include information on how students who are victims of toxic relationships can build resilience through therapy, support groups, and the development of positive relationships (Nuccio, 2021).

METHOD

The type of research used in this study is quantitative research, which employs correlation analysis to investigate the relationship between self-esteem (X) and resilience (Y) among female students who have been victims of toxic relationships. According to Sugiyono (2019), the minimum sample size suitable or that can be taken in a study is 30 individuals. Therefore, the sample used in this study consists of 207 female students who have experienced toxic relationships and become victims. The sampling method used is incidental, where anyone encountered by the researcher and deemed suitable as a data source can be used as a sample, and there were 372 students from various universities across Indonesia who participated in this study as respondents and experienced toxic relationships. Data collection and distribution were conducted instrumentally according to Sugiyono (2018), and the research instrument used was a questionnaire. Participants were asked to fill out an Informed Consent form as part of the research protocol.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to determine whether there is a relationship between self-esteem and resilience among university students who are victims of toxic relationships. The hypothesis was tested using the Pearson correlation technique, which yielded a correlation coefficient value of $r_{xy} = -0.283$ with a significance value of 0.004 ($p < 0.05$). The results obtained indicate that the hypothesis is rejected, meaning that there is a relationship, albeit negative, between self-esteem and resilience among university students who are victims of toxic relationships.

Tabel 1.

The Relationship Between Self-Esteem And Resilience Among University Students Who Are Victims Of Toxic Relationships

		Self Esteem	Resilience
Self-Esteem	Pearsen Correlation	1	-,545**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		,000
	N	372	372
Resilience of students who are victims of toxic relationships	Pearsen Correlation	-,545**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	,000	
	N	372	372

Based on the calculation results of the testing, it was found that individuals have low self-esteem, which is an assessment of personal achievement considering the extent to which behavior aligns with the desired self-image. Feelings of worthlessness, inadequacy, and low self-esteem persist due to negative self-assessments and individual abilities (Fajariyah, 2012). University students who are victims of toxic relationships often experience a decline in self-esteem. They may feel worthless, powerless, or even guilty about the situations they experience. These feelings can be triggered by toxic



behaviors from partners or the surrounding environment, such as insults, neglect, or emotional manipulation. It is explained that someone with low self-esteem due to factors such as violence, a less harmonious family, or mass media will easily get trapped in toxic relationships (Wulandari, 2019).

Despite experiencing low self-esteem, not all students will give up easily. Some individuals can develop high levels of resilience, which is the ability to bounce back from challenges and difficulties. However, the main finding of this research is that the direction of the relationship between self-esteem and resilience is actually negative. Although there may be an initial assumption that students with low self-esteem will have higher levels of resilience as a mechanism to cope with the toxicity of their relationships, the results obtained indicate otherwise. This raises some interesting questions about the psychological dynamics in toxic relationships and their impact on individual self-esteem and resilience. Unhealthy relationships can lead to unhappiness during their duration. This results in a decrease in self-esteem due to lead to unhappiness during their duration. This results in a decrease in self-esteem due to inappropriate treatment and lowering expectations in building relationships. As a result, many people choose to separate when involved in toxic relationships (Fatah, 2022).

The resilience score data indicates that the majority of respondents fall into the high category. Resilience, as described by Rahmawati (2017), refers to an individual's ability to bounce back from stressful situations or to recover from disruptive circumstances. Additionally, resilience can also be used to overcome negative influences that hinder individuals from achieving their goals or desires. Therefore, it can be concluded that university students who are victims of toxic relationships demonstrate good and positive levels of resilience. They are able to endure and adapt to difficult situations when facing toxic relationships and have the ability to overcome challenges, feeling stronger and more confident. This data indicates that the majority of respondents are able to adapt to their social environment, feel comfortable in social interactions, and have a positive outlook on themselves and their surroundings (Sianturi, 2023).

The description of the self-esteem scores falls into the moderate category. Self-esteem is an internal component that impacts the formation of an individual's resilience, according to Lopez, Pedrotti, and Snyder (2018). Self-esteem influences a person's level of happiness and resilience, and motivates them to lead a healthy and productive lifestyle. Those who take pride in themselves know the importance of feeling proud of who they are and what they have achieved. Individuals with good self-esteem will not allow themselves to be looked down upon by others. When facing challenges in life, having confidence and self-esteem will help them stay resilient in overcoming those challenges. This indicates that early adult women who are victims of toxic relationships have good and positive self-esteem, including self-acceptance, self-appreciation, and other self-esteem attributes. The data shows that the subjects feel successful, capable, and useful even if they have weaknesses and failures in the past. They also have the ability to view positively what is within themselves and all things outside of themselves (Aninah, 2017).

In this study, self-esteem was chosen as the variable influencing resilience because an individual's ability to unconditionally accept themselves and positively evaluate themselves and their lives is considered to help individuals adapt positively and overcome difficulties. Stuart and Sundeen (1991) define self-esteem as an individual's evaluation of their achievements considering the extent to which their behavior aligns with ideal standards. Individuals with low self-confidence may struggle to accept the realities of life.



Therefore, it requires a high level of flexibility, good intelligence, and the ability to find adequate solutions to various problems encountered (Aunillah, 2017).

Someone with low self-esteem generally tends to feel inadequate in facing challenges and has a tendency to feel failure-prone, give up easily, feel hopeless, and ultimately not succeed in life. Good self-esteem makes someone feel deserving of respect from others (Aninah, 2017). Furthermore, resilience is the ability to overcome problems or emerge from difficult situations. Adolescents who have difficulty dealing with problems are advised to build good relationships with family, relatives, and friends. They can share the problems they face with their parents, spend time with loved ones, and improve their own self-confidence (Supriyanti, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study indicates that the hypothesis proposed in this research is rejected. This suggests there is a negative relationship between self-esteem and resilience among university students who are victims of toxic relationships. From the findings of this research, it can be concluded that although individuals with low self-esteem tend to be vulnerable to stress, resilience can still be a source of strength for them. The findings suggest that in the context of toxic relationships, individuals with low self-esteem but high resilience may still be able to cope with stress effectively. This highlights the complexity in the relationship between self-esteem and resilience, as well as the importance of considering additional factors that can influence individual resilience.

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