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Emotion Regulation and Dating Violence on Students That Go Through Toxic Relationship

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Original Article

Emotion Regulation and Dating Violence on Students That Go Through Toxic Relationship

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Abstract. Students who study in tertiary institutions are individuals who are starting to enter early adulthood. Dating is one of the important roles performed by individuals who are in the category of early adulthood. However, in a dating relationship, it is undeniable that various problems can arise. One of the problems that may arise is dating violence. It is common for dating violence in dating relationships to get individuals trapped in a toxic relationship. Various factors are considered the triggers of dating violence, one of which is low emotion regulation ability. This study aims to determine the relationship between emotion regulation and dating violence among students in Salatiga. This study uses a quantitative method with a correlational design involving 40 participants. The researcher obtained participants in this study through a snowball sampling technique. Data was collected using the emotion regulation scale and dating violence scale. The data analysis results showed a significant negative relationship between emotion regulation and dating violence with sig value. = 0.010 ($p < 0.05$) and an r-value of -0.364.

Keywords: Dating Violence; Emotion Regulation; Toxic Relationship; Students

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Introduction

Students are currently studying and enrolled in higher education institutions, polytechnics, academies, institutes, and universities (Hulukati & Djibran, 2018). According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), students are individuals studying in higher education (KBBI, nd). Hulukati and Djibran (2018), noted that the average student has an age range between 18-25 years, categorized into early adulthood.

Individuals in the early adult category will try to adjust their lives in new ways by taking advantage of their freedom (Harsanti & Maulana, 2015). Individuals in the early adulthood age range experience a transitional period of physical, intellectual, and social roles. In their social roles, individuals begin to shift from a selfish attitude to an empathetic attitude. At this time, individuals start to assume that relationships have an essential part in life and begin to establish more intimate relationships with the opposite sex (Dewi & Minza, 2016).

In order to build a more intimate relationship, an individual must combine his identity and others without losing his own identity. It explains how many romantic relationships are built by individuals in early adulthood (Utami & Murti, 2017). A romantic relationship is a relationship between individuals in which there are intimacy, passion, and commitment called love (Yuwanto 2014). Dating or marriage are forms of romantic relationships. Many individuals choose to start having a romantic relationship in dating while in college (Ohee & Purnomo, 2018).

Dating is a process of meeting one individual with another individual in a social context to consider the individual who will be a life partner (Wongso, 2014). Dating is a premarital relationship between a man and a woman accepted by society (Migiana & Desiningrum, 2015). The dating relationship begins when individual and other individuals are attracted to each other, and in the process, there is a commitment to start dating relationship (Liana & Herdiyanto, 2017).

Dating relationships aim to build others up and make the individuals involved in the relationship feel safe and valuable (Putri, 2012). However, behind the positive things in a dating relationship, it is common to encounter problems. Problems that arise can come from family, economic level, to differences in personality from one another. This problem often ends in conflict. If this conflict begins to occur, dating violence can be found in dating relationships, leading to the trapping of individuals in toxic relationships. A toxic relationship is an unhealthy relationship that involves oneself and others, which can lead to inner conflict within oneself (Julianto, Cahayani, Sukmawati, & Aji., 2020). In toxic relationships, the use of violence is often considered a way to resolve conflicts or problems between partners (Putri, 2012).

Based on the initial data survey conducted by researchers on September 14-21, 2021, to several students undergoing toxic relationships in Salatiga, the data showed that 66.67% of participants had experienced dating violence, both physical and emotional violence. In addition, 25% of participants had been perpetrators of dating violence. The Symphony of Women and Children Protection (2018), also noted that in 2016 as many as 2.090 of 10.847 violence perpetrators were girlfriends/boyfriends. Then in the 2018 Annual Notes of the National Women's Commission, the data stated that 19% of violence in personal relationships was violence in dating which took third place with 1.873 cases. It is comparable to the number of sexual violence perpetrators who are girlfriends/boyfriends, reaching a number of 1.528 cases (Primastika, 2019).

Dating violence is violence perpetrated by someone who has a romantic relationship with their partner and can occur physically, emotionally, or sexually (Womenshealth, 2011). Reporting from Violence Prevention Works (2016), dating violence is as violent, aggressive, emotional, sexual behavior, and restrictions in dating relationships. In addition, dating violence is a repeated pattern carried out by individuals against their partners in all forms of violence in dating relationships (Diaz, Herrero, Franco, Molleda, Quesada & Pérez, 2017; Mahruliana, Hariyani & Syahputra, 2020).

The occurrence of dating violence can be seen based on several components stated by Diaz et al. (2017). The first is detachment which is violence that causes couples to feel reluctant or unable to relate to others. The second is humiliation, where the individual insults his partner as a form of assertion of power. The third form is sexual, which can be described as unwanted sexual seduction or speech. The fourth, coercion is the personal attacks, threatens, humiliates, or intimidates intending to hurt, punish, or frighten a partner. The fifth is physical, which is described as violence that aims to cause physical pain or injury. The sixth is gender-based, which is a form of violence against partners based on gender. Seventh is emotional punishment, in which individuals use emotions to control, criticize, humiliate, blame, or manipulate their partner. The eighth, instrumental can be described as violence to involves the partner's response to the threat he made and forcing the partner to give money or belongings.

Dating violence certainly does not arise without a cause. Many factors can trigger the emergence of violence in dating. These trigger factors include low levels of education, understanding of patriarchy, the habit of using narcotics and alcohol, inability to control emotions, temperamental nature, childhood parenting, level of economic welfare, place of residence, and social effects (Kemenpppa, 2018). According to the World Health Organization (2021), 1 in 3 women in the world has experienced violence perpetrated by a partner. However, dating violence is not only perpetrated by men against women. Dating violence perpetrated against men by women also occurs. It's just that men often choose not to talk about the violence they experience (Pfeiffer, 2020).

Dating violence happens because of individuals' low emotional control or emotion regulation (Rachel, 2017). Emotions and emotion regulation are formed when individuals are in social situations where individuals depend on others, and these individuals will evaluate others as social beings (Hofmann, Carpenter, & Curtiss, 2016). Emotion regulation is a person's ability to block inappropriate behavior due to the intensity of the emotion felt, calm himself from the psychological influences that arise, refocus, and organize himself to regulate appropriate behavior in achieving goals (Anggraini, 2015).

Emotion regulation in each individual includes several aspects, namely: the tendency of individuals to seek other people to increase feelings of happiness (enhancing positive affect), using other people as reminders not to worry, and sometimes some people are worse than the individual (perspective taking), looking for other people to provide comfort and sympathy (soothing), and looking for others to see how different individuals overcome particular problems or situations (social modeling) (Hofmann et al., 2016).

Individuals who have good emotion regulation will certainly bring various benefits to their lives, where it will be easier for them to have good self-control as well. In addition, individuals will have good interpersonal relationships, be careful, have good adaptability, tolerate frustration, and have a favorable view of themselves and their environment (Goleman, 2004).

Emotion regulation is vital for individuals in interacting with other individuals. In addition, how individuals can convey the right emotions at the right time is associated with emotion regulation (Hendriana & Hendriani, 2015). In a dating relationship, emotion regulation is also essential. If this emotion regulation does not exist in a dating relationship, it is not uncommon for violence to arise in the relationship (Kemenpppa, 2018).

Many find that the leading cause of dating violence is angry emotions that cannot be appropriately controlled (Rachel, 2017). This angry emotion often uses words to bring down the partner's feelings which ultimately makes the couple feel guilty, depressed, not free, and uncomfortable (Susanti, Husni, & Fitriyani, 2018). Not infrequently, dating violence is carried out to maintain what is considered theirs (Rohmah & Legowo, 2014). On the other hand, victims who feel weak, insecure, and love their partner will easily forgive after their partner apologizes and seems to show guilt (Kemenpppa, 2018). It is one of the characteristics of a toxic relationship where individuals always encourage feelings of guilt in every problem in the relationship (Efendi, 2020).

Previous research conducted by Megawati, Anwar, and Masturah (2019), found a significant negative relationship between emotion regulation and dating violence. It shows that the lower the emotion regulation, the higher the violent behavior in dating. Another study conducted by Baird (2015), found that cognitive reappraisal, which is one of the emotion regulation strategies, has a significant relationship with acts of physical aggression in romantic relationships. It is different from the research conducted by Lawlor (2016), where there was no relationship between emotion regulation and violent behavior in dating. This study found that the habit of blaming others when feeling negative emotions correlated with dating violence.

Many individuals do not realize that they have experienced dating violence or have even become perpetrators of dating violence (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, 2019). Fear of other people's opinions or the consequences when talking about dating violence makes individuals choose to remain silent. Through existing phenomena and looking at previous studies, the researcher intends to re-examine the relationship between emotion regulation and behavior dating violence in students in Salatiga. This study will focus on the relationship between emotion regulation and dating violence behavior from the perspective of the perpetrator which is different from previous studies that looked at the side of victims who received dating violence. Then, this study hypothesizes that there is a negative relationship between emotion regulation and dating violence. The higher a person's emotion regulation, the lower the likelihood that dating violence will appear and vice versa. Through this research, it is hoped that it can show how emotional regulation affects the life of an individual, especially individuals

who consciously or unconsciously have become perpetrators of dating violence, and become a guide to help an individual who is a victim to be able to get out of toxic relationships.

Method

Research Design

The research method used in this study is quantitative with a correlational design to determine the relationship between emotion regulation (X) and dating violence (Y).

Sample and Procedure

The population of this research is students in Salatiga. The researcher used a snowball sampling technique to obtain a sample with the following criteria: students aged 18-25 years who are in a dating relationship and are perpetrators of dating violence. The researcher used the snowball sampling technique because of the uncertain population. Another reason for the researcher to use this technique is because dating violence is a sensitive topic for people to talk about. This criterion is based on Hulukati and Djibran (2018), views regarding the age of students who are categorized as early adulthood and the task of individual development to establish more intimate relationships with the opposite sex. All participants in this study were previously asked to fill out an informed consent form relating to the study's procedures scale. For a description of the demographics of the participants, it is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics of Research Participants

Characteristics of Participants	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	8	20%
Female	32	80%
Age		
18	1	2.5%
19	7	17.5%
20	9	22.5%
21	16	40%
22	4	10%
23	1	2.5%
24	1	2.5%
25	1	2.5%

Instruments

In this study, the scale used consisted of two, the emotion regulation scale and the dating violence scale. Emotion regulation consisting of enhancing positive affect, perspective taking, soothing, and social modeling (Hofmann et al., 2016), was measured using the Interpersonal Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (IERQ: Hofmann et al., 2016), which was then adapted and modified the statement items to adapt to the characteristics of the participants. On this scale, 19 statement items are using five answer choices from the Likert scale (Azwar, 2017), namely: Strongly Agree (*Sangat Setuju/SS*), Agree (*Setuju/S*), Neutral (*Netral/N*), Disagree (*Tidak Setuju/TS*), and Strongly Disagree (*Sangat Tidak*

Setuju/STS). From the test, the range of item selection values is 0.358-0.712, and the scale reliability level is 0.899, classified as very reliable.

Then, dating violence was measured using the Dating Violence Questionnaire-R (DVQ-R) developed by Diaz et al (2017), based on eight components of dating violence; detachment, humiliation, sexual, coercion, physical, gender-based, emotional punishment, and instrumental which are then adapted and modified the statement items to suit the characteristics of the participants. On this scale, 41 items are using five answer choices from the Likert scale (Azwar, 2017), namely: Strongly Agree (*Sangat Setuju/SS*), Agree (*Setuju/S*), Neutral (*Netral/N*), Disagree (*Tidak Setuju/TS*), and Strongly Disagree (*Sangat Tidak Setuju/STS*). From the test, the item selection value range is 0.338-0.855, and the scale reliability level is 0.956, classified as reliable.

Data Analysis

The data in the study were tested using an assumption test consisting of a normality test and a linearity test. Then, test the hypothesis using the product-moment correlation test from Karl Pearson to determine the relationship between emotion regulation and dating violence. In addition, a descriptive test was used to see the categorization of each scale. Testing the data will use the help of the IBM SPSS Statistics 21 program. In this study, data collection was carried out using a google form (bit.ly/TACChristine) because the COVID-19 pandemic situation resulted in limited space between researchers and participants to meet in person.

Results

Table 2. Categorization of Emotion Regulation Scale Measurement

Interval	Category	Mean	F	%
$60.6 < x \leq 71$	Very High		1	2.5%
$50.2 < x \leq 60.6$	High		7	17.5%
$39.8 < x \leq 50.2$	Medium	40.60	16	40%
$29.4 < x \leq 39.8$	Low		7	17.5%
$19 < x \leq 29.4$	Very Low		9	22.5%
Total			40	100%
Min = 19; Max = 71; SD = 12.070				

Based on the results of the descriptive analysis on the emotion regulation scale in Table 2, the lowest score obtained was 19, and the highest score was 71, with an average of 40.60 and a standard deviation of 12.070. Thus, the emotion regulation of students who commit dating violence is in the moderate category with a percentage of 40%.

Table 3. Categorization of Dating Violence Scale Measurement

Interval	Category	Mean	F	%
$185.8 < x \leq 205$	Very High	186.60	26	65%
$166.6 < x \leq 185.8$	High		9	22.5%
$147.4 < x \leq 166.6$	Medium		3	7.5%
$128.2 < x \leq 147.4$	Low		1	2.5%
$109 < x \leq 128.2$	Very Low		1	2.5%
Total			40	100%
Min = 109; Max = 205; SD = 20.656				

The dating violence scale shown in Table 3 shows the lowest score of 109 and the highest score of 205, with an average of 186.60 and a standard deviation of 20.656. Thus, dating violence behavior by students is in the very high category with a percentage of 65%.

Classical Assumption

Table 4. Normality Assumption Test for Measurement Scale

		Emotion Regulation	Dating Violence
<i>N</i>		40	40
<i>Normal Parameters^{a,b}</i>	<i>Mean</i>	40.60	186.60
	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	12.070	20.656
	<i>Absolute</i>	.095	.190
<i>Most Extreme Differences</i>	<i>Positive</i>	.095	.187
	<i>Negative</i>	-.080	-.190
<i>Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z</i>		.601	1.204
<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</i>		.863	.110

From the normality test results in Table 4, the value of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z on the emotion regulation variable is 0.601 and sig. = 0.863 ($p > 0.05$). In the variable the F is calculated at variable dating violence, the value of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z is 1.204 and sig.= 0.110 ($p > 0.05$). Thus, these two variables are normally distributed.

Table 5. Test of Assumptions of Linearity of Measurement Scale

			<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Dating Violence *	<i>Between Groups</i>	<i>(Combined)</i>	12699.267	26	488.433	1.611	.185
Emotion Regulation	<i>Linearity</i>		2208.638	1	2208.638	7.287	.018
	<i>Deviation from Linearity</i>		10490.629	25	419.625	1.384	.274
	<i>Within Groups</i>		3940.333	13	303.103		
	<i>Total</i>		16639.600	39			

From the linearity test between emotion regulation (X) and dating violence (Y) in Table 5, the F value is calculated at 1.384 and sig.= 0.274 ($p > 0.05$), which indicates a linear relationship between emotion regulation and dating violence.

Research Hypothesis Test

Table 6. Emotion Regulation Hypothesis Testing with Dating Violence

		Emotion Regulation	Dating Violence
Emotion Regulation	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	1	-.364**
	<i>Sig. (1-tailed)</i>		.010
	<i>N</i>	40	40
Dating Violence	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	-.364**	1
	<i>Sig. (1-tailed)</i>	.010	
	<i>N</i>	40	40

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).*

From the results of the correlation test product-moment from Karl Pearson in Table 6, it is known that the value of sig. (1-tailed) between emotion regulation and dating violence was 0.010 ($p < 0.05$), and the r-value was -0.364. It shows that there is a significant negative relationship between emotion regulation and dating violence. This research show that emotion regulation contributes to dating violence by 13.25%

Table 7. Independent Sample Test

		<i>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</i>		<i>t-test for Equality of Means</i>				
		<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>Std. Error Difference</i>
<i>Dating Violence</i>	<i>Equal variances assumed</i>	.351	.577	-	38	.696	-3.250	8.255
	<i>Equal variances not assumed</i>			-	9.920	.723	-3.250	8.902

From the T-test in Table 7, it was found that the value of Sig. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is 0.577 ($p > 0.05$), which means that the data variance between dating violence in the male and female groups is homogeneous. The value of sig. (2-tailed) of 0.696 indicates that there is no significant difference between dating violence in the male and female groups.

Contribution of Each Aspect of Dating Violence

Table 8. Descriptive Test of Dating Violence Aspects

Aspect	Percentage	Category
Detachment	45%	Very High
Humiliation	70%	Very High
Sexual	87.5%	Very High
Coercion	47.5%	Very High
Physical	75%	Very High
Gender-based	72.5%	Very High
Emotional Punishment	50%	Very High
Instrumental	87.5%	Very High

From the results of the descriptive test of dating violence in Table 8, all aspects of dating violence are in the very high category. Then, the highest percentage of 87.5% is indicated by the sexual and instrumental aspects. In addition, the lowest percentage is marked by the aspect, detachment, which is 45%.

Discussion

This study proves that the research hypothesis is accepted that emotion regulation has a significant negative relationship with dating violence which indicates a strong influence between emotion regulation and dating violence. The result is negative, which suggests that the lower the emotion regulation of a person, the higher the likelihood of dating violence to occur.

On the other hand, the higher a person's emotion regulation, the lower the chance of dating violence. In addition, this study shows that dating violence is in the very high category caused by regulating emotions in the moderate to very low range.

The regulation of emotions in each indeed cannot be separated from one's life experience. In early adulthood, the individual begins to enter a chronologically mature age, but at the same time, the individual is not necessarily emotionally mature (Adila & Kurniawan, 2020). At this early age, individuals enter relationships expected to have openness, responsiveness, and acceptance, and respect for one another (Agusdwitanti, Tambunan, & Retnaningsih, 2015). However, the ideal relationship expected in early adult individuals is not found in toxic relationships. Toxic relationships are filled with distrust, dishonesty, lack of respect, and even violence (Nancy, 2020). This study found that the most common type of dating violence is the sexual violence and instrumental violence. It supports Mannika's (2018), research, which found that 4 out of 5 people in dating relationships are more likely to experience sexual violence.

An individual's low emotion regulation ability has a greater risk of committing dating violence. This study supports research conducted by Megawati, Anwar, and Masturah (2019) and Baird (2015), which also show that the cause of the emergence of dating violence is low emotion regulation ability. An individual needs good emotional regulation to be directed by the goals. Individuals who have the low emotional regulation ability will be associated with increased aggressive behavior (Megawati et al., 2015).

It is undeniable that humans are social creatures who cannot live without others (Hutagalung, 2015). Individuals will try to find other people to increase feelings of happiness in themselves. In relationships between individuals, it is not uncommon for comfort and sympathy from partners to be needed. However, if these things are not found, dating violence may occur. The desire to continue to be given feelings of happiness, comfort, and sympathy, but not otherwise, is a sign of the individual trapped in a toxic relationship.

In a relationship, it is common for individuals to feel worried and not okay. Individuals will expect that their partner will provide reminders and calm them down. Imitating how a partner handles a problem in a particular situation is also not uncommon. It is called social modeling. Social modeling is one aspect of emotion regulation. Social modeling is how individuals see other individuals overcoming specific problems or situations (Hofmann et al., 2016). Therefore, if one resolves a problem with violence in a relationship, it is not uncommon for his partner to do the same.

From the 40 participants in this study, 80% of the participants were female, and 20% of the participants were male. It proves that dating violence is not only perpetrated by men but also by women. The violence carried out also varies from detachment, humiliation, sexual, coercion, physical, gender-based, emotional punishment, and instrumental. Men trapped in dating violence choose to remain silent, and individuals have seen reported the consequences of particular social views against men (Robinson & Segal, 2021). Many men feel ashamed and do denial when they find out that they have experienced dating violence. In a different test, this study also proved no difference between women and men in the likelihood of committing dating violence.

From a social perspective, it is often men who are seen as perpetrators of dating violence (Storey, O'Donnell, Gilboe, Varcoe, Wathen, Malcolm, & Vincent., 2019). Men are seen to be more capable of aggression and usually acts of dating violence by men tend to cause great harm to the victim such as injury. In contrast to women, dating violence committed by women is considered a form of resistance or a form of self-defense against violence committed by their partners. Coupled with the existence of other supporting factors such as parenting, the environment, to the duration of the relationship itself (Elmquist, Hamel, Shorey, Labrecque, Ninnemann, & Stuart., 2014).

This study itself shows that sexual violence and instrumental violence are the most frequent in dating relationships. Perpetrators of this violence have the power and control to commit sexual violence without regard or respect. In addition, there is aggressiveness shown by

the perpetrators, one of which is caused by low emotion regulation abilities (Rutgers, 2022). Likewise with instrumental violence. Instrumental violence aims to get something by hurting another person. This is done by showing an attitude of aggression that is no different from sexual violence caused by aggressiveness due to low emotion regulation abilities (Stangor, Jhangiani, & Tarry, 2022).

In today's era, perpetrators of sexual violence increasingly do not see gender. Anyone can be a perpetrator or a victim. The low level of support for survivors of violence in relationships makes many victims choose to remain silent and choose to remain silent. On the other hand, the insufficient punishment given to perpetrators of violence causes many perpetrators to roam everywhere. More serious handling is needed to break the chain of violence so that it does not continue. Talking with other people about the problems they are experiencing, taking time to love yourself more, and, if necessary, seek professional help victims of violence get out of the bondage of toxic relationships. Thus, a more positive life may lead to better emotion regulation, more optimal functioning of life, and improved mental health.

Conclusion

This study concludes a significant negative relationship between emotion regulation and dating violence in students who undergo toxic relationships. Emotion regulation is in the moderate to the very low category while dating violence is very high. Individuals who have inadequate emotion regulation will tend to commit dating violence. It reveals that poor emotion regulation is one of the keys to dating violence in toxic relationships. In addition, there was no difference between dating violence committed by men and women. This underlines that emotion regulation plays an important role in the occurrence of dating violence, not the individual's gender characteristics.

The results of this study can be used as a source of information, especially for individuals who will or are in a dating relationship to be wiser and more careful in building mutual commitments. Trying to understand, accept, and listen can be a way of creating positive, positive relationships. Learning to open up and tell stories, realize the importance of loving yourself, and seek professional help must different be done by individuals stuck in a toxic relationship. Recognizing bad relationships early on needs to be done to avoid bad possibilities in the future, for example, in marriage relationships.

This research is limited to students' perpetrators of violence, so that it has not reached all perpetrators of violence in general with varying educational and occupational backgrounds. Therefore, further research is expected to broaden the scope of participants and analyze forms of dating violence in more detail. In addition, further research is expected to provide assistance programs to help individuals recognize dating violence and know how to get out of a toxic relationship.

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