

A Photovoice Study: Experiences of Victims of Dating Violence among Overseas Students

M. Fikran Pandya ^{1*}, Sya'ban Abdullah Fiqri¹, Muhammad Jamaluddin¹

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Indonesia

*Correspondence to: fikranpandya01@gmail.com

Abstract: Dating violence is a deep-seated issue that has significant impacts on its victims, especially among female students who live away from home. This study aims to explore the experiences of victims of dating violence using the photovoice method, which allows victims to express their experiences through photography. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with six female students who live away from home in Malang, Indonesia. The results showed that dating violence includes physical, psychological, behavioral control, and sexual coercion. Identified risk factors include patriarchal attitudes, promiscuity, and lack of understanding of dating violence, while protective factors include positive self-concept and social support. The impacts include psychological trauma, social isolation, and obstacles to self-development. This study highlights the role of social media in normalizing violence and the phenomenon of silent toxicity in relationships. Personalized interventions and broader education are needed to increase awareness and prevention of dating violence.

Keywords: dating violence, overseas students, teenage girls

How to Cite: Pandya, M.F., Fiqri, S.A., & Jamaluddin, M. (2025). A Photovoice Study: Experiences of Victims of Dating Violence among Overseas Students. *Intuisi: Jurnal Psikologi Ilmiah*. 17(2), 57-72

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.26714/intuisi.17.2.2025.57-72>

Introduction

According to WHO, (2013) dating violence is identified as violence in the context of an intimate relationship with a partner. WHO defines intimate partner violence as any action or behavior by an intimate partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to that partner. This includes acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and behavior that controls or limits an individual's freedom. Komisi Nasional Perempuan, (2024) reports that violence in dating relationships includes various forms of unpleasant and abusive behavior between partners. This can include breach of promise, sexual coercion, cyber violence, physical violence, and economic violence.

Previously, a global study also reported that adolescent girls had a 20.9% chance of becoming victims of dating violence, which had twice the prevalence of boys at 10.4% (World Health Organization, 2019). WHO further concluded that around 20% of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual abuse by their partners (World Health Organization, 2019). What's worse, the majority of victims (55-95%) do not seek any help (Creamer et al., 2020; Vagi et al., 2015). In the Indonesian context, according to the National Commission on Violence against Women, there were 406,178 cases of violence against women reported in 2018. This figure is 14% higher compared to the number of cases in the previous year. In additional reports, there were also 2,073 cases of violence in dating which was ranked second, after the number of violence against women in the household, namely 5,114 cases (Komisi Nasional Perempuan, 2019). In Malang, a city in East Java, Indonesia, Dinsos-P3AP2KB said that there were around 92 complaints of violence against women, especially during dating, from early 2023 to April 2024, this number may be too small because there is a tendency for victims not to report these cases (Dinsos-P3AP2KB, 2024).

WHO also reports that factors that cause vulnerability to intimate partner violence and sexual violence include low education, exposure to violence in childhood, promiscuity, power gaps in intimate relationships, as well as attitudes and norms that accept violence and gender inequality (World Health Organization, 2019). This risk factor is often found in Malang, one of the areas known as an educational city in Indonesia with a high level of overseas students, resulting in increased promiscuity, frequent exposure to violence and inequality to want to rule (control) (Amalia, 2021; Astutik & Puji Laksono, 2016).

A previous quantitative-comparative study regarding the prevalence of cyber dating violence (cyber control and cyber aggression) in 919 adolescents aged 12-18 years in Valencia, Spain showed that in general, respondents tended to disapprove of dating violence and the highest significance was involved in Dating violence, especially online, occurs among women (Cava et al., 2020). Another quantitative study shows that violence in dating can be influenced by masculine ideology, where the higher a man's masculine ideology, the higher the risk of a man committing acts of psychological, physical and sexual violence against his partner (Adiningsih et al., 2020). A systematic analysis of 17 photovoice studies on gender-based violence confirms the significant impact of violence on female victims. This approach assists victims in self-care and utilizing community resources, highlighting its important role in the recovery process and victim empowerment (Christensen, 2019).

So what makes this research different is that there were no other photovoice studies that targeted female overseas students who experienced violence in dating. This research aims to conduct an in-depth exploration and narrative regarding dating experiences involving victims of violence, using photography produced by these victims. The population studied was overseas female students, because their vulnerability to violence in romantic relationships, promiscuity, and lack of parental supervision made them the main focus of this research.

Method

This research is qualitative in nature through a photovoice design (female students who are victims of dating violence) to dare to speak out through images. Participants in this research were six female students who had migrated. Participants were selected using purposive sampling with several inclusion criteria: 1) female teenagers aged between 15-24 years, 2) victims of dating violence, 3) students in Malang, Indonesia. As explained previously, teenage girls have a higher risk of becoming victims of violence in dating, therefore the author chose female students as research participants, in accordance with the adolescent age range set by the UN (United Nations). To collect participants, the first and second authors sent messages on a chat application to advertise the research project. Participants then contacted the first author to ensure participants were eligible and willing to participate. The first and second authors visited the participants several times and often chatted with them via the messenger application to build relationships. At the end of the study, participants were compensated for their contributions in the form of small souvenirs (e.g. thimble bottles). Data saturation was considered to have been reached and the interview was stopped for the sixth participant after all authors agreed that no further new information was obtained from the sixth participant's interview session. The information from this sixth participant was determined by the authors to be similar to other information previously collected. This is in accordance with the definition which sees saturation as a method for identifying data redundancy, where data saturation is achieved when new data repeats what has been expressed in previous data (Saunders et al., 2018). Participant demographic data can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Participant demographic

Participants	Age (years)	Education	Length of Relationship	Relationship status
Participant 1	20	Bachelor	3 years, 2 months	Stay together
Participant 2	19	Bachelor	2 years	Separated
Participant 3	18	Bachelor	1 year	Separated
Participant 4	18	Bachelor	1 year, 2 months	Separated
Participant 5	19	Bachelor	1 year, 4 months	Separated
Participant 6	19	Bachelor	5 years	Separated

All authors except the third author are lecturers at universities in Malang. The first and second authors are undergraduate students studying at a university in Malang, trained in qualitative methodology by the third author and took part in the research as data analysis. The third author is qualified in the social sector with extensive experience in qualitative studies and a role in data processing.

Data from this research was collected using a photovoice approach. Photovoice is a method developed by Wang and Burris to enable people to identify, represent, and improve their communities through photos. Photos taken by community members are then discussed so that people can note and reflect on their strengths and concerns (Wang & Burris, 1997). The entire research process was carried out from February 2024 to April 2024. Diaries and audit trails were kept for the duration of the research. The photovoice method in this research was implemented through several steps. First, the author met with all participants to explain the research process and obtain their consent. Then, participants were instructed to choose photos that depicted as many experiences of dating violence as possible. Photos were taken using the participant's cell phone. After taking photos, participants were then interviewed using a semi-structured interview approach by the first author to get the story behind the photos taken. The main question that guides the interview is "What is the meaning behind this photo?"

After concluding that data saturation was reached, the discussion continued to an online focus group via the WhatsApp application and lasted for 30 minutes. This was facilitated by the second author and observed by another author and the data was observed by the third author. The questions discussed in the group discussion are based on the SHOWED method which consists of five main questions: 1) What do you see here? (See), 2) What really happened here (Happening), 3) How does it relate to our lives? (Our), 4) Why does this problem exist, how can this image educate the public? (Why), 5) What can we do to improve the situation? (Do).

Data from interviews and focus groups were analyzed manually using thematic analysis developed by Braun & Clarke, (2006) without any software, the process went through six stages: 1) data introduction, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) review themes, 5) define and rename themes, and 6) create a report. Data were provided by the three authors, and themes derived from the data were discussed by the three authors. Participants provide input on data via the WhatsApp messenger application. This study also used the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) guidelines to ensure important information was reported in the research (Tong et al., 2007).

Result and Discussion

Thematic analysis of the data produced five main themes and 18 subthemes. Table 2 below presents the main themes and subthemes of this research.

Table 2. Main themes and subthemes	
Theme	Subtheme
Forms of violence in dating	- Physical abuse - Psychological Violence - Controlling Behavior - Sexual Coercion
Risk factors	- Patriarchal Attitude - Promiscuity - Lack of Knowledge about Violence in Dating
Protective factors	- Positive self concept - Knowledge about violence in dating - Friendship environment
The Impact of Violence in Dating	- Psychological Impact - Social Impact - Impact on self-development
Withholding and withdrawing from a relationship	- Restraining due to the influence of the social environment and social media - Resist the impact of your partner's background circumstances - Starting a new relationship - Interesting for religious reasons - Changes after withdrawing from a relationship
The influence of social media in normalizing violence	- Normalization of violence in relationships through social media content - Media shapes the perception of 'love must be sacrificial' - Repeated exposure to violent content in dating
Silent Toxicity in Dating Relationship	- Symbolic and nonverbal violence in dating - Psychological effects of invisible violence - Environmental influences in perpetuating silent toxicity

Theme 1: Forms of Violence in Dating

Four forms of dating violence are explained in this study. Physical violence was reported by Participant 5, Participant 2, and Participant 3 who admitted that they had been slapped, hit, and even strangled by their partners. Participant 5 explained that his partner usually slapped him during an argument, when he was often caught cheating on him with another woman. Participant 5 described his experience of experiencing physical violence through a picture showing the inside of his own house where the violence occurred (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Rented house, a place vulnerable to physical violence

"A bad thing happened here. He slapped me several times, worse has happened here before. Previously, when he slapped me, it must have been at the same time as him hitting and kicking me, but I kept responding so that it wouldn't hurt me too much (physically and psychologically). However, at that time he hit me so hard on the head that I fell to the floor and my face swelled. That was my first experience of being hit like that. I was depressed, annoyed, to the point of hurting my own hand, all my feelings were mixed up in this picture, especially when I saw this place." – Participant 5

Psychological violence occurred among some participants. Their partners abuse them psychologically by calling them inappropriate nicknames, saying inappropriate things, and blaming them every time they fight. Next, violence also occurs in the form of controlling (possessive) behavior. Research participants reported that their partners tried to control their social life with other people, forbidding them from making friends and meeting certain friends or family, and always confiscating/checking their cell phones.

Participant 3 illustrates this in a drawing of a paper scribble (Figure 2), which shows the constant needling of feelings of pressure due to her controlling boyfriend.



Figure 2: Scribbles on paper, symbolizing feelings of pressure, control and demands from participant 3's girlfriend – Participant 3

"Why did I choose this paper scribble, because after I broke up with him I realized that in the past all my activities and even my circle of friends were controlled, suppressed, and demanded by him. Because behind his preferences, he acts overprotective like that. So, it's like a pen that always pokes at the paper and makes scribbles so that I feel depressed." – Participant 3

Participant 1 also reported being a victim of sexual coercion. She admitted her boyfriend forced her to have sex with him. He explained that in the beginning, his girlfriend often sent pictures of his genitals to him, and asked him for VCS (Video Call Sex).

Theme 2: Risk Factors

Four risk factors for violence in the study were reported in female students. Participant 2 described that his partner thinks that men should be taller than women and should be more dominant, both in attitude and tone of speech and should not be weak in front of him. This attitude is described as a patriarchal attitude. According to Walby, (1989) analysis defines patriarchy as a series of social relationships that are structured and allow men to dominate, oppress and exploit women. This patriarchal attitude makes the male partner believe that he has the right to hurt Participant 2 to show his dominance. This view also made Participant 2's partner underestimate and not care about Participant 2.

Next, promiscuity can also be a risk factor for violence in dating. Participant 2 explained that his partner's friendship environment was very free, plus the age gap was quite large, namely 5 years. This makes him think about normalizing all dominant actions as he pleases.

"On average, his friends like to drink, gamble and even have casual sex, because he also works in a bad place (which is negative). Therefore, he becomes someone who is not controlled and lives as he pleases without fear of violation, so he doesn't want anyone to hinder his activities, let alone belittle him." – Participant 2

This research also explains the lack of knowledge about dating violence as one of the risk factors. Participant 4 explained that because of his lack of knowledge, he considered his partner's controlling behavior to be proof that he cared and loved her enough. During the focus group, Participant 4 also said that most communities (especially their partner's area) still lack information about dating violence, so they don't even realize that they are victims of dating violence.

"Usually, what he often says to me is that violence in dating is normal when you are in a relationship. Because it is a spice to strengthen mutual love between people. From that, I concluded that he had no knowledge of the impact of violence, even though I often reprimanded him." – Participant 4

Theme 3: Protective Factors

This factor is interpreted as a factor that protects against violence that occurs against female students. The protective factors found in this research were positive self-concept, knowledge about dating violence, and friendship environment. Self-concept is defined as a person's ideas or beliefs about himself. In the focus group, research participants explained that a positive self-concept makes them aware of their own worth and understands that respect is required. Participant 5 further explained that it is important for female students to educate themselves about dating violence. Participant 5 also added that anyone who is a victim of dating violence must have the courage to speak up to get out of the abusive relationship they have been in.

"In my opinion, we have to speak out, whether through you (writers) or through other things, but by speaking up, at least we can get out of the toxic zone." – Participant 5

In the focus group, Participant 3 stated that with appropriate knowledge regarding dating violence, at least we will be able to immediately see the signs of violence before it occurs, which can help prevent it from happening again. In another focus group, Participant 3 also stated that parents need to guide their daughters in a friendship environment. Participant 1 believes that parents need to be protective and build relationships with their children so that they are intense and comfortable, so that the friendship environment and anything related to violence in dating can be prevented.

Theme 4: The Impact of Violence in Dating

Dating violence in relationships has a significant impact on research participants, where researchers found that the impacts include psychological impacts, social impacts, and personal development impacts. The biggest impact felt by the participants was the psychological impact. Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 5, and Participant 6 reported that when the violence occurred, they began to lose trust in their partner and became suspicious easily. Participant 3 explained that all the sweet memories they had when they were dating were destroyed instantly when their partner was violent, and he became depressed about it. Even though their partner has apologized, they think that there is still pain and trauma felt because the painful things, whether actions or words, have not gone away. He symbolized this feeling through a photo he took of a broken glass (see Figure 3).



Figure 3: The glass is broken into pieces, a symbol of disappointment, sadness and hatred in this situation – Participant 3

Another participant, Participant 5, also reported that the sexual acts he received from his partner traumatized him towards men. He believes that the reason he has not dared to be close to men until now is because of the sexual acts he often receives, even though it is only VCS (video call sex). Because his partner's actions had exceeded normal limits, the result was a stigma on him that all men did that. He expressed this in the photo (registration form) he took when registering at one of the campuses abroad (see Figure 4).

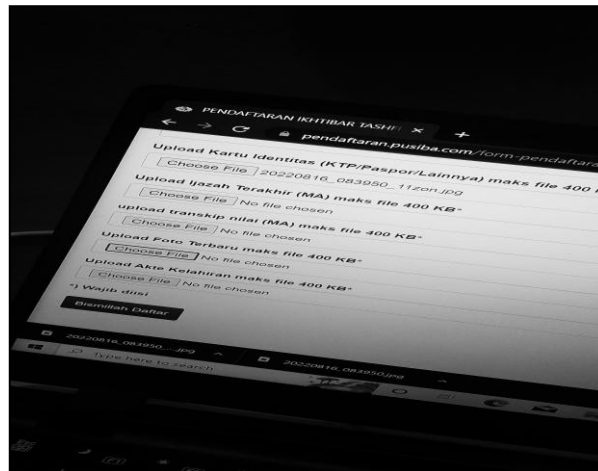


Figure 4: Campus registration form, symbolizing feelings of anxiety and fear regarding things related to relationships with men – Participant 5

"Since that incident (VCS), which he often did, he sent me photos of his genitals almost 5 times and asked me to do VCS. Even though I keep refusing, I still feel very anxious about him, every time I meet a guy, whoever it is, I feel like all guys are the same and it has become a big trauma for me." – Participant 5

Furthermore, participants reported that they were unable to socialize with certain friends because their partners continued to overthink and over-control the people they interacted with. Participant 4, when interviewed, also said that he could no longer pursue his hobbies and talents because his partner prohibited him. He symbolizes this through the pictures he takes. In the picture there are waves crashing while he is on the beach, which implies that Participant 4's hobbies and talents are being dragged away by his partner's selfish desires, implying that all the steps he has taken so far have been lost (see Figure 5).

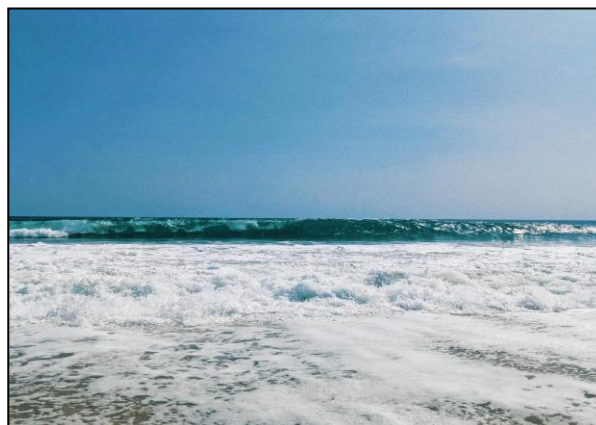


Figure 5: The crashing waves of the ocean on the beach depict the hopes that have long been aspired to be dashed – Participant 4

Theme 5: Withholding and Withdrawing from Relationships

When this research was conducted, the majority of participants had separated from their partners. However, there are still participants who are still in a relationship with the perpetrator. Participant 1 reported that the friends around him and the social media he had been following always gave him the stigma that love requires sacrifice. As a result, he believes that in a relationship he must make sacrifices by discussing his partner's behavior as proof of his love. Participant 2 said one of the reasons he decided to maintain the relationship was because he felt sorry for his partner who came from a broken home. Participant 2 admitted that he was worried that if he broke up with him, his partner would do undesirable things such as commit suicide.

"As a partner who has been together for a long time, I already know all the ins and outs of my partner, including his family situation, so I would feel sorry if I broke up with him, because he comes from a broken home. I'm afraid he's going the wrong way." – Participant 1

One of the participants, Participant 6, said that he had started a new relationship with his new girlfriend. He said that his new girlfriend was more romantic and built his relationship more confidently. However, he admits that he sometimes still feels anxious about putting his trust in his new girlfriend, but he is trying to change that.

"Feelings like that often come to mind (disbelief), but he always tries to be positive. So I tried to delete it (didn't believe it)." – Participant 2

Furthermore, Participant 2 stated in the focus group that the reason he broke up with his partner was because of religious factors. Where after he experienced violence in a relationship, he immediately consulted his religion teacher at school, and this convinced him to immediately break up with his toxic relationship, because it was prohibited by religion and was committing a sinful act.

Participants experienced negative and positive changes after ending the relationship. Participant 4 explained that when he finally broke up with his partner, he continued to cry continuously for a whole month. Participant 3 also mentioned that when he first broke up with his partner, he turned to playing games and scrolling TikTok as an escape. Participant 6 added that since the breakup, he has not been interested in starting a new relationship.

In his interview, Participant 3 stated that after breaking up with his partner, he experienced several positive changes. Now he can focus on pursuing his hobbies and talents.

"Many positive things that I always wanted to do are possible now. Basically, I have completely changed from how I used to be." – Participant 3

Participant 3 also experienced several positive changes after breaking up with his partner. He said these days he is calmer, more confident and independent.

Theme 6: The Influence of Social Media on Victims' Perceptions and Decisions

Social media plays a big role in shaping victims' perceptions of their relationships. Participants in this study reported that they often saw content that normalized possessive and violent behavior as a sign of love. Posts on various social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter often show couples controlling their partner's activities as a form of attention, which can unknowingly shape the mindset that such behavior is something normal in a relationship. For example, participant 6 said that after often seeing such content on TikTok, she began to believe that the verbal violence she experienced was part of what was normal in a relationship as the concept of "love must be sacrificial".

"I think if he gets angry and controls what I do, it's because he loves me. Because on social media, many people say that love requires sacrifice." – Participant 6

In further discussion, other participants also conveyed that social media has a big impact on shaping relationship expectations. The dominant narrative on social media often blurs the line between healthy care and excessive control. As a result, many victims have difficulty recognizing signs of violence in their relationships. In addition, participant 2 also shared her experience of how social media affects her perspective on relationships.

"I often see videos or posts that say that a partner who is too indifferent is a sign that they don't really love you. So I feel it's normal for my boyfriend to always ask for my location all the time or want to know who I'm going out with. I think it's a form of attention," – Participant 2

Meanwhile, participant 4 highlighted how pressure from social media made it difficult for her to leave an abusive relationship (see Figure 6).

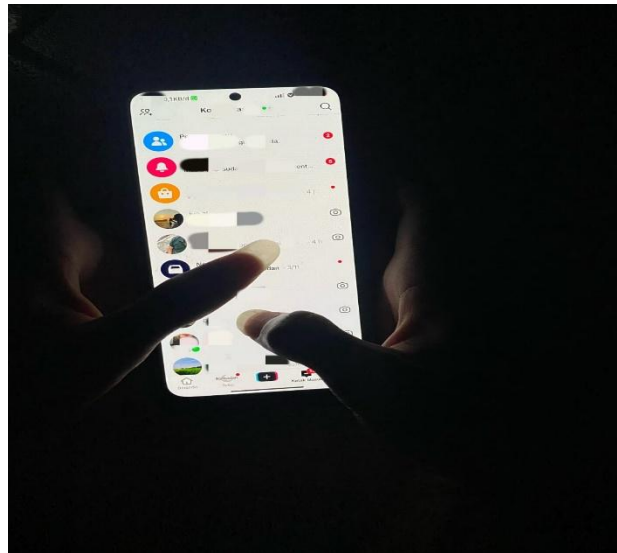


Figure 6: This TikTok chat illustrates that the influence of social media makes my perception and decision making bad – Participant 4

"I often see netizen comments blaming the victim when they break up after a bad relationship. They say you have to be patient and endure because every relationship has its trials. I'm afraid that if I leave him, I'll be thought of as unfaithful." – Participant 4

Theme 7: Silent Toxicity in Dating Relationship

The results of the study conducted on 6 participants showed that silent toxicity is a fairly common phenomenon, with 4 out of 6 participants reporting having experienced it. The participants consistently stated that they experienced psychological stress in the form of sadness and heartache due to their partner's behavior who tended to ignore them. Forms of silent toxicity experienced include being ignored when talking, getting cynical looks, and partners deliberately distancing themselves when in front of other people. Most of the participants in this study can be said to have not only experienced physical and verbal violence, but they have also experienced invisible violence. Participant 3, said that since the

beginning of their relationship for years, she felt that she was getting further and further away from a healthy relationship, in addition to receiving unpleasant treatment, Yesi also often felt that she was not considered a partner but had a relationship status, non-reciprocal communication, often looked at with a sharp gaze.

Social media plays a big role in shaping victims' perceptions of their relationships. Participants in this study reported that they often saw content that normalized possessive and violent behavior as a sign of love.

" We've been dating for a long time, but the longer it goes on, the less he cares, it's like I'm not considered. But he also doesn't want to every time I ask to break up. He prefers to have more fun with his other friends laughing, but when I ask him to chat, he just keeps quiet with a sarcastic face without talking or responding to what I say. So sometimes I feel embarrassed and hurt when other people see me like that." – Participant 3

These findings expand the understanding of Toxic Relationships, which are not limited to visible physical and verbal abuse, but also include non-verbal behaviors that are not visible but have significant psychological impacts. Participants reported feeling uncared for, resulting in deep emotional pain even though no physical abuse occurred. This theme underscores the importance of recognizing and acknowledging the silent treatment as a form of Toxic behavior in interpersonal relationships.

Discussion

This research reveals significant findings regarding interpersonal violence, especially in the context of dating relationships. Through a photovoice approach, this research succeeded in capturing and describing the negative impact of dating violence on the psychological condition of female overseas students. Two images that attract attention are images of broken glass and scribbled paper, which provide a narrative that depicts psychological wounds that are often more difficult to feel than physical wounds resulting from dating violence. These portraits provide an overview of the diversity of individual experiences in dealing with various forms of dating violence. This emphasizes the importance of a personalized intervention approach tailored to each victim's psychological needs, to provide effective support in their recovery process. Previous systematic reviews regarding the need for emancipatory and liberating pedagogical approaches to be implemented from an early age in schools by involving families and communities to prevent violence in dating (Marcos et al., 2022; Taquette et al., 2019). In the world of work, co-workers must also be more aware of how to identify those who experience dating violence, in order to avoid prolonged trauma (Miller et al., 2018). Malang's environment has high risk factors, and there is a dire need for effective personalized interventions for victims, through consideration of the specific context that influences victims.

One participant mentioned how his girlfriend was a victim of bullying. Previous studies show that people who experience high levels of bullying also have a significantly higher risk of committing similar acts or victimization against their partners as well (Espelage et al., 2022; Viejo et al., 2020). Victims of violent acts in bullying also appear to report much higher levels of victimization in physical dating and emotional abuse than non-victims (Kusumaningrum & Nastiti, 2023).

Another important information found in this research is regarding the decision to maintain a relationship due to social media factors. One of the participants believed that the result of seeing content on social media which was widely published was that love requires sacrifice. This fact is rarely mentioned in previous studies. However, considering the skyrocketing development of social media, this makes sense. Social media plays an important role in people's lives, especially Indonesia, as a tool for obtaining a lot of information (Kahne & Bowyer, 2018). Social media which increasingly dominates strengthens social pressure on people to follow trends and lifestyles. In cases of dating violence, this pressure can influence the victim to distance themselves from their abuser or remain in a dangerous relationship.

Government involvement, especially through the Ministry of Communication and Information (Kominfo), is very necessary to intervene. Measures may include limiting content and age of social media users as well as promoting anti-violence content and social support. This is expected to break the cycle of dating violence and protect its victims.

The contextual reason mentioned by several research participants when they decided to maintain a relationship was because of their partner's poor background as a traumatic victim of their parents' authoritarian parenting at home. Authoritarian parenting is socially controversial among society, especially the family environment (El Hafiz & Almaududi, 2015). The participant mentioned how his girlfriend experienced trauma due to violence perpetrated by her parents at home. This social construction causes victims of dating violence to feel afraid that if their partner breaks up, their partner will do dangerous things because they will no longer have anyone to confide in. Fear of traumatic victims itself mainly comes from cultural beliefs inherent in society, which are also held in other countries besides Indonesia (Fernández-Fillol et al., 2021; LaMotte & Taft, 2017; Watson, 2013). The term Post-Traumatic Disorders (PTSD) is constructed psychologically as something that defines a person's mental health, therefore requiring intervention (Pouy et al., 2018). This construction encourages tolerance towards violence and encourages victims of dating violence to remain with their partners, even though they have experienced psychological or physical oppression.

Persistent cultural beliefs often make victims of dating violence reluctant to leave their abusive partners, thus perpetuating the cycle of violence due to tolerance of it. As discussed previously, the patriarchal attitudes inherent in society add to the complexity of this problem and emphasize the need for comprehensive intervention. Interventions that involve the entire community, including youth groups such as *Genre* in Indonesia and women's empowerment organizations, are critical to eliminating these dangerous beliefs (Hunnicut, 2009). By providing education about boyfriend violence and counseling services for victims, they can help change the paradigm that reinforces violence and reduces its prevalence.

Furthermore, social media plays a large role in shaping victims' perceptions of their relationships. Participants reported that they often saw content that normalized possessive behavior and emotional abuse as signs of love. For example, some social media posts showed partners controlling their partner's activities as a form of attention. One participant stated that after seeing such content frequently, she began to believe that the verbal abuse she experienced was normal in relationships. The participant described her experience through a photo of her phone screen filled with social media posts that glorified the concept of 'love requires sacrifice'. These findings are consistent with previous research showing that social media can reinforce norms that tolerate violence in romantic relationships (Bouffard et al., 2022; Ulanova, 2020). Repeated exposure to narratives that depict possessive behavior as a form of love creates cognitive biases that make it more difficult for victims to recognize the signs of dating violence (Chun et al., 2020).

In addition, the study also revealed that some participants felt hesitant to end their relationships due to social pressure caused by the media. They were worried about the negative stigma of leaving a relationship that had been publicized on social media, which worsened their emotional attachment to the abusive partner. This supports the findings of the study which stated that social media can strengthen unhealthy emotional attachments through self-presentation and social validation mechanisms (Tari Selçuk et al., 2022).

Supporting this, silent toxicity in dating relationships is also often experienced by the participants of this study. Where they often do not realize that they are victims of their partners because of their closed and nonverbal nature (Ragavan et al., 2021). This is characterized by demeaning body gestures and facial expressions, control over freedom of expression, and unbalanced communication that makes it difficult for victims to express their feelings. Studies show that nonverbal violence is more dangerous than physical violence because it is difficult to recognize and is often considered normal (Ragavan et al., 2021; Viejo et al., 2020). Victims tend to experience mental exhaustion and prolonged emotional stress without

realizing the root of the problem, resulting in unhealthy emotional dependence. In addition, the surrounding environment often reinforces silent toxicity by normalizing possessive or jealous behavior as a sign of love Toxic Relationship in Emerging Adulthood (Permana et al., 2023). As a result, victims find it increasingly difficult to get out of a detrimental relationship because they lose a healthy perspective on a balanced relationship (Adiningsih et al., 2020; Taquette et al., 2019).

Therefore, it is important to be active in society to call out the heinous acts of dating, especially violence in dating. In this case, there is a need for collective intervention from religious communities such as IRMAS (mosque youth association), BPKRMI (Indonesian Mosque Management Body), or other religious assemblies together with government officials to maximize the dangerous impact of dating, even violence in dating either offline campaigns or online campaigns, such as seminar outreach, recitations, religious educational content and so on. The details are presented in the interpretation scheme of the discussion findings in Figure 7.

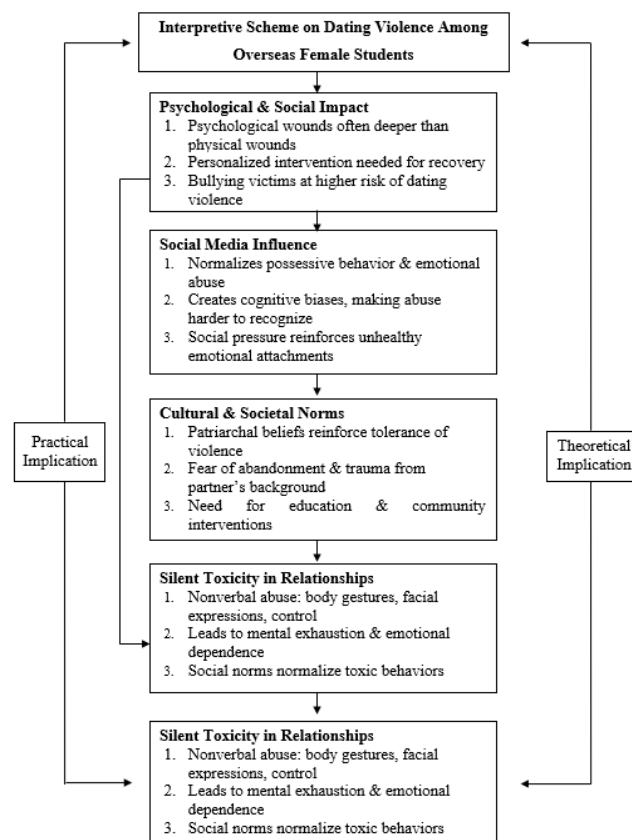


Figure 7: Interpretation Scheme

Conclusion

This study reveals the experiences of dating violence experienced by female students from other regions in Malang, Indonesia, using the photovoice method. The results of the study indicate that dating violence can take the form of physical, psychological, behavioral control, and sexual coercion. Risk factors that contribute to this incident include patriarchal attitudes, promiscuity, and lack of understanding of dating violence. Meanwhile, protective factors such as positive self-concept, knowledge of dating violence, and a supportive friendship environment can help reduce the risk of becoming a victim. The

impact of dating violence is very significant, both psychologically, socially, and on the victim's self-development. Many victims experience trauma, loss of self-confidence, and difficulty in socializing after experiencing violence. Some victims stay in relationships because of compassion or social pressure, while others manage to get out and experience positive changes in their lives.

This study also highlights the role of social media in shaping victims' perceptions of their relationships, where content that glorifies possessive behavior and emotional violence as signs of love can complicate victims' decision-making to end a toxic relationship. In addition, the phenomenon of "silent toxicity" in relationships, where non-verbal violence such as neglect and demeaning expressions occur, was also found to be a form of violence that is difficult to recognize but has a profound psychological impact.

With these findings, the study emphasizes the importance of personalized interventions according to the psychological needs of victims, as well as the need for better education about dating violence in the community. Environmental support, both from family and friends, is also very important in helping victims get out of harmful relationships. In an environment with high risk factors such as Malang, stronger community efforts and policies are needed to prevent dating violence. This study has limitations in the number of participants, which is only six people and focuses on women as victims. Further research is recommended to explore the perspectives of male victims as well as broader social factors that contribute to dating violence.

References

- Adiningsih, H. B., Dannisworo, C. A., & Christia, M. (2020). Dating violence perpetration: Masculine ideology and masculine gender role stress as predictors. *Humanitas: Indonesian Psychological Journal*, 17(1), 12–22. <https://doi.org/10.26555/humanitas.v17i1.13553>
- Amalia, N. N. (2021). *Hubungan borderline personality disorder dan harga diri terhadap kecenderungan menjadi korban kekerasan dalam pacaran pada mahasiswa di Kota ...* (Unpublished undergraduate thesis). UIN Malang. <http://etheses.uin-malang.ac.id/id/eprint/27813>
- Astutik, J., & Puji Laksono, S. (2016). Kekerasan gender dalam berpacaran di kalangan mahasiswa: Gender abuse on dating of university students (case study in Malang). *Jurnal Perempuan dan Anak*, 1(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.22219/jpa.v1i1.2747>
- Bouffard, S., Giglio, D., & Zheng, Z. (2022). Social media and romantic relationships: Excessive social media use leads to relationship conflicts, negative outcomes, and addiction via mediated pathways. *Social Science Computer Review*, 40(6), 1523–1541. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08944393211013566>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- Cava, M. J., Martínez-Ferrer, B., Buelga, S., & Carrascosa, L. (2020). Sexist attitudes, romantic myths, and offline dating violence as predictors of cyber dating violence perpetration in adolescents. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 111, 106449. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106449>
- Christensen, M. C. (2019). Using photovoice to address gender-based violence: A qualitative systematic review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 20(4), 484–497. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838017717746>
- Chun, C., Park, B., & Shi, C. (2020). Re-living suspense: Emotional and cognitive responses during repeated exposure to suspenseful film. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 558234. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.558234>
- Creamer, M. L. R., Everett Jones, S., Gentzke, A. S., Jamal, A., & King, B. A. (2020). Tobacco product use among high school students—Youth risk behavior survey, United States, 2019. *MMWR Supplements*, 69(1), 56–63. <https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.su6901a7>
- Dinas Sosial P3AP2KB Kota Malang. (2024). Dinsos Kota Malang terima 92 pengaduan kekerasan terhadap perempuan. *Radarmalang*. <https://radarmalang.jawapos.com/kota-malang/814595316/dinsos-kota-malang-terima-92-pengaduan-kekerasan-terhadap-perempuan>

- El Hafiz, S., & Almaududi, A. A. (2015). Peran pola asuh otoriter terhadap kematangan emosi yang dimoderatori oleh kesabaran. *Humanitas*, 12(2), 130-141. <https://doi.org/10.26555/humanitas.v12i2.3842>
- Espelage, D. L., Ingram, K. M., Hong, J. S., & Merrin, G. J. (2022). Bullying as a developmental precursor to sexual and dating violence across adolescence: A decade in review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 23(4), 1358–1370. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380211043811>
- Fernández-Fillol, C., Pitsiakou, C., Perez-Garcia, M., Teva, I., & Hidalgo-Ruzzante, N. (2021). Complex PTSD in survivors of intimate partner violence: Risk factors related to symptoms and diagnoses. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 12(1), 2003616. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20008198.2021.2003616>
- Hunnicut, G. (2009). Varieties of patriarchy and violence against women: Resurrecting “patriarchy” as a theoretical tool. *Violence Against Women*, 15(5), 553–573. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801208331246>
- Kahne, J., & Bowyer, B. (2018). The political significance of social media activity and social networks. *Political Communication*, 35(3), 470–493. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2018.1426662>
- Kusumaningrum, T., & Nastiti, A. A. (2023). Factors associated with dating violence behavior in adolescents. In *Proceedings of the 13th International Nursing Conference* (pp. 202–208). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369927048_Factors_associated_to_dating_violence_behavior_in_adolescents
- LaMotte, A. D., & Taft, C. T. (2017). PTSD, anger, and trauma-informed intimate partner violence prevention. *Current Treatment Options in Psychiatry*, 4(3), 262–270. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40501-017-0121-1>
- Marcos, V., Allende, M., & Bliesener, T. (2022). Dating violence: A systematic review. In *Libro de actas del XIV Congreso (Inter)Nacional de Psicología Jurídica y Forense* (pp. 209–215). Andavira.
- Miller, E., Jones, K. A., & McCauley, H. L. (2018). Updates on adolescent dating and sexual violence prevention and intervention. *Current Opinion in Pediatrics*, 30(4), 466–471. <https://doi.org/10.1097/MOP.0000000000000637>
- Komnas Perempuan. (2024). Siaran pers: Peluncuran catatan tahunan kasus kekerasan terhadap perempuan tahun 2023. <https://komnasperempuan.go.id/siaran-pers-detail/siaran-pers-komnas-perempuan-tentang-peluncuran-catatan-tahunan-kasus-kekerasan-terhadap-perempuan-tahun-2023>
- Komnas Perempuan. (2019). Korban bersuara, data bicara: Sahkan RUU penghapusan kekerasan seksual sebagai wujud komitmen negara. <https://komnasperempuan.go.id/...>
- Permana, Z., Koentjoro, K., & Azca, M. N. (2023). Toxic relationship in emerging adulthood. *Jurnal Wanita dan Keluarga*, 4(1), 88–105. <https://doi.org/10.22146/jwk.8765>
- Pouy, S., Peikani, F. A., Nourmohammadi, H., Sanei, P., Tarjoman, A., & Borji, M. (2018). Investigating the effect of mindfulness-based training on psychological status and quality of life in patients with breast cancer. *Asian Pacific Journal of Cancer Prevention*, 19(7), 1993–1998. <https://doi.org/10.22034/APJCP.2018.19.7.1993>
- Ragavan, M., Syed-Swift, Y., Elwy, A. R., Fikre, T., & Bair-Merritt, M. (2021). The influence of culture on healthy relationship formation and teen dating violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(7–8), NP4336–NP4362. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518787815>
- Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., et al. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: Exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity*, 52(4), 1893–1907. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8>
- Taquette, S. R., Leite, D., & Monteiro, M. (2019). Causes and consequences of adolescent dating violence: A systematic review. *Journal of Injury and Violence Research*, 11(2), 137–147. <https://doi.org/10.5249/jivr.v11i2.1061>
- Tari Selçuk, K., Avci, D., & Ataç, M. (2022). Health professionals’ perception of social stigma... *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, 37(3), 189–204. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15555240.2022.2078724>
- Tong, A., Sainsbury, P., & Craig, J. (2007). Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ). *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, 19(6), 349–357. <https://doi.org/10.1093/intqhc/mzm042>

- Ulanova, E. L. (2020). The influence of social media on modern romantic relationships. *Bezbednost*, 62(1), 138–156. <https://doi.org/10.5937/bezbednost2001138k>
- Vagi, K. J., Olsen, E. O. M., Basile, K. C., & Vivolo-Kantor, A. M. (2015). Teen dating violence among US high school students. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 169(5), 474–482. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2014.3577>
- Viejo, C., Leva, B., Paredes, J., & Ortega-Ruiz, R. (2020). Bullying and psychological dating violence. *Psicothema*, 32(4), 533–540. <https://doi.org/10.7334/psicothema2019.223>
- Walby, S. (1989). Theorising patriarchy. *Sociology*, 23(2), 213–234. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038589023002004>
- Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*, 24(3), 369–387. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109019819702400309>
- Watson, S. (2013). *PTSD and violence* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham). <http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/4056/>
- World Health Organization. (2019). *Violence against women: Intimate partner and sexual violence against women*. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-RHR-19.16>
- World Health Organization. (2019). *Preventing violence against women*. www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/violence/enWHO/RHR/18.19