



THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS ON MENTAL HEALTH : A REVIEW

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Abstract

Toxic relationships can profoundly impact an individual's mental health, leading to a range of psychological effects. The constant stress and emotional turmoil associated with such relationships can result in anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Individuals may find themselves in a cycle of self-doubt and negative thinking, often internalizing the criticisms and manipulations from their partners. Over time, this can lead to feelings of worthlessness and isolation, as they may withdraw from friends and support systems due to shame or fear of judgment. The cumulative stress of living in a toxic environment can also trigger physical health issues, further compounding mental distress. This Paper explores the concept of Psychological Effects of Toxic Relationships on Mental Health, key principles of inclusive education, effective strategies for inclusion, challenges and solutions and the anticipated impact on India's educational system.

Keywords: Toxic Relationships, Mental Health, Psychological Effects

INTRODUCTION

Toxic relationships can have devastating psychological effects on mental health, leading to a range of issues such as anxiety, depression, and diminished self-esteem. Individuals often find themselves trapped in a cycle of emotional manipulation, criticism, and instability, which can result in persistent feelings of worthlessness and self-doubt. This chronic stress can not only erode one's self-image but also create a sense of isolation, as victims may withdraw from friends and support systems out of shame or fear of judgment. Over time, the toll of living in such a harmful environment can trigger physical health problems, further exacerbating mental distress. The scars of a toxic

relationship can linger long after it has ended, manifesting as trust issues that hinder the ability to form healthy connections in the future. Survivors may approach new relationships with heightened anxiety, constantly on guard for signs of past abuses, which can perpetuate a cycle of avoidance and emotional turmoil. To break free from these detrimental patterns, it is crucial for individuals to seek therapeutic support and develop coping strategies that promote healing, self-acceptance, and the establishment of healthier relationship dynamics. Ultimately, recognizing the signs of toxicity and understanding their impact on mental health is a vital step towards recovery and personal growth.

CHARACTERISTICS OF TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS

Toxic relationships can be detrimental to emotional and mental well-being. Here are some key characteristics that define them:

- **Constant Criticism** : Frequent negative comments about one another, undermining self-esteem and creating feelings of inadequacy.
- **Manipulation and Control** : One partner may use emotional manipulation to gain control, often employing guilt or gaslighting tactics to distort reality.
- **Lack of Support** : A noticeable absence of empathy and support, where one partner dismisses the other's feelings and needs, leading to emotional neglect.
- **Jealousy and Possessiveness** : Excessive jealousy or possessiveness that limits the other's freedom and creates feelings of paranoia and mistrust.
- **Emotional Unavailability** : One partner may be emotionally distant, avoiding meaningful communication and intimacy, leading to feelings of loneliness.
- **Isolation** : Attempts to isolate one partner from friends and family, reducing their support network and increasing feelings of loneliness.
- **Boundary Violations** : Disregard for personal boundaries, leading to feelings of discomfort and a lack of respect for individual autonomy.

IMPACT OF TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS

The effects of toxic relationships can be profound and long-lasting. Individuals may experience:

- **Emotional Distress**: Chronic stress, anxiety, and depression can arise from enduring toxic dynamics. The emotional toll can lead to feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.
- **Decreased Self-Esteem**: Continuous criticism and manipulation can erode an individual's self-worth, leading them to doubt their abilities and value.
- **Physical Health Issues**: The stress associated with toxic relationships can manifest physically, resulting in symptoms such as headaches, fatigue, and a weakened immune system.

- **Social Isolation:** Toxic partners may isolate their victims from friends and family, leading to loneliness and a lack of support.

STRATEGIES FOR COPING AND HEALING

- **Awareness and Acknowledgment:** The first step toward healing is recognizing and acknowledging the toxic nature of the relationship. Understanding that one is in a harmful situation empowers individuals to seek change.
- **Establishing Boundaries:** Setting clear boundaries is essential for protecting emotional well-being. Communicating what behaviors are unacceptable and adhering to these boundaries helps create a healthier dynamic.
- **Seeking Support:** Engaging with trusted friends, family members, or mental health professionals can provide valuable support. Sharing experiences can foster a sense of connection and help individuals feel less isolated.
- **Prioritizing Self-Care:** Self-care is crucial in healing from a toxic relationship. Activities that promote physical and mental well-being, such as exercise, hobbies, and mindfulness practices, can restore balance and resilience.
- **Considering Exit Options:** In some cases, the healthiest choice may be to leave the toxic relationship. Creating a plan for a safe exit is vital, especially if emotional or physical safety is a concern.

RELATED LITERATURE

Anugrah et al. (2024) conducted a study on Analysis of Toxic Relationships In Interpersonal Communication Among Teenagers. The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze toxic relationships in interpersonal communication among adolescents. The research method used is a qualitative approach. The data in this research are the results of interviews with informants who experienced unhealthy relationships, both with parents (mothers who always compare them with other people), and lovers (perpetrator of verbal and physical violence). The data was then analyzed using the Miles & Huberman Interactive Model which consists of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions/verification. The results of the study show that: first, the perpetrators of toxic relationships, namely toxic people, could be the closest people to the victim, such as the nuclear family, consisting of father-mother-brothers and sisters

Zulfiana et al. (2023) conducted a study on phenomenological study of adolescent perception of toxic relationships. The purpose of this study was to determine the phenomenon of adolescent perceptions about toxic relationships. A qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach, was conducted. The sampling technique in this study used snowball sampling. The results showed that the 4 respondents had different perceptions about toxic relationships, knowledge about toxic relationships is very important to be given to determine the behavior of today's adolescents. It is recommended that teenagers, especially students, can choose the information they get, ranging from negative to positive, so that they are not wrong in taking action.

Hellgren (2023) conducted a study on Impact Of Toxic Relationships On Mental Health. It was found in the study that understanding the detrimental effects of toxic relationships on mental health is the first step towards healing and creating a healthier future. Recognizing the signs, seeking support from trusted individuals, and considering professional guidance are vital for breaking free from toxic dynamics.

Rahimah et al. (2022) conducted a study on Effect of Toxic Relationships in Friendship on The Psychological Well-Being of Islamic University Students. The method used for this research is simple regression. With a population of 11,000 people and a sample of 265 students aged 18-22 years. The results of this study are, (1) the level of psychological well-being in Islamic University Students is dominated by the very high category as many as 155 students with a percentage of 58.5%, (2) the level of toxic relationship among Islamic University Students is dominated by the low category as much as 140 students with a percentage of 52.8%, (3) there is an influence between variables toxic relationships and psychological well-being with effect level of 11.4%. Although it does not have a big influence, it is important for us to control a healthy friendship environment to maintain psychological well-being in ourselves.

Anggreini and Nugroho (2022) conducted a study on Motives and Meanings of Toxic Relationships in Adolescent Interpersonal Relationships in Pontianak City. This study focuses on adolescents who are entangled in unhealthy relationships in courtship. This study used a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to motives and meanings. The results showed that the Teenagers are very vulnerable to experiencing toxic relationships because they have not been able to control their feelings and have not been able to manage the stress they experience. Because this toxic relationship leads more to verbal violence, the words uttered by the perpetrator will make the victim feel pessimistic, have low self-esteem, and lose self-confidence

Rifayanti et al. (2022) conducted a study on Phenomenological Studies: Adolescent Toxic Relationships. This study aims to find out the picture of toxic relationships experienced by adolescents dating. This type of research is a type of qualitative research with phenomenological methods. The data collection methods used are interviews and observations. The data collection technique used is the purposive sampling technique. The results showed that the toxic relationships they have experienced have caused a lot of harm to themselves both in terms of physical, mental, and academic. This makes the three subjects more careful if they want to get to know new people and assume that a toxic relationship can never be repaired.

CONCLUSION

Toxic relationships can severely impact mental health, leading to issues such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. The emotional turmoil and manipulation often present in these dynamics create a detrimental environment that undermines one's sense of self-worth and well-being. Prolonged exposure to such negativity can

hinder personal growth and the ability to form healthy connections in the future. Acknowledging the effects of toxic relationships is essential for recovery, highlighting the need for support, self-reflection, and positive relationships that promote mental resilience and emotional health.

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