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## The Effect of Toxic Friendship on Students' Mental Health

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the influence of toxic friendships on students' mental well-being. Specifically, it examines the detrimental effects of negative relationships within friendships on individuals' mental states. The research focuses on students enrolled in the Communication Science Study Program at Mercu Buana University Yogyakarta, Class of 2021. A sample of 135 students was selected using a simple random sampling technique from a population of 226. This type of research is quantitative research with a survey method approach. This study employing a modified questionnaire titled "Effect of Toxic Friendship on Student Mental Health" as the primary data collection instrument. The data obtained is then analyzed using SPSS software. The results indicated that toxic friendship has no effect on students' mental health. The instrument in this study used a questionnaire. The results showed that toxic friendship has no effect on students' mental health. The study underscores the need for further research to better understand the complexities of social relationships and their implications for mental health. This work contributes to the ongoing discourse on the factors affecting students' psychological well-being in educational settings.

**Keywords:** Mental health; Students' relationship; Toxic friendship

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### INTRODUCTION

In a friendship, we often find a friend as a suitable person both from jokes, traits, and many other differences that make us think that we are choosing the wrong friend. A friend with a negative influence on our thoughts, actions, and mentality can make us susceptible to their opinions and thoughts. Furthermore, bullying is not uncommon within friendships, and it is associated with mental health issues, including high levels of depression, psychological distress, anxiety disorders, social problems, and a tendency to develop antisocial personalities (Faizah & Zaujatul, 2017; Yunanto, 2019). There are many factors that affect mental health including religiosity, physical, psychic, and a

person's environment (Hardianti, et. al., 2021). The total population of Indonesia is currently 233 million people and 26.8% or 63 million people are adolescents (Indonesian-Investments, 2017). Dinamika mental health is indeed very visible in the period of *akil baligh* or the period of self-identity and-identities, namely in adolescence. The mental health condition of adolescents in Indonesia is motivated by the experience of adolescents in the academic and non-academic fields (Willenberg, et. al., 2020) . Teenagers are the next generation of the nation who have an important role in the future where they are expected to be able to excel and be able to face the challenges that exist in the present and the future (Safitri, 2013). This serves as clear evidence that children and adolescents facing limitations in their learning activities at home are at risk of developing mental health disorders (Zulfia, et al. 2021, p. 15). According to Egga UGM data in 2020, the percentage of depression in adolescents touched 6.2%. Aristotle's experts explain that a friendship relationship is a special relationship that can help each other, never thinking about obligations and mutual benefit. On the other hand, Toxic friendship is often interpreted as a friendship relationship whose relationship negatively affects fellow friends, always feels jealous between friends, knocks each other down, charges and many other negative things.

Previous research entitled "*Perilaku Komunikasi Toxic Friendship*" by Wadji (2021) explained about toxic friendships that begin with communication. The paper provides extensive insights into communication behaviors as suggested by its title. However, it lacks an exploration of specific actions resulting from toxic communication, along with data demonstrating its impact on individuals. But so far the previous author has explained in detail and contains a fairly complete explanation, so that readers can understand what and how toxic communication occurs. Previously, toxic communication was divided into verbal communication consisting of vowels (spoken language), non-vowels (written) and non-verbal vowels (Tone of voice, sigh, screams, vocal quality), and non-vocal (Gestures, Movements, Appearances, facial expressions).

This paper aims to complement the parts or pieces that were lacking in previous studies in the hope that the written work compiled can make a fairly perfect work in explaining what toxic friendship is, which of course begins with intertwined communication. Hope that the paper compiled this time can explain well, correctly, and convey to readers the purpose and purpose of the problem being studied. With an explanation regarding the influence of toxic friendship, the author hopes that after reading this paper, readers will know and realize how important it is to stay away from friendships that are not good for each individual's mental health so that there are no bad influences such as anxiety disorders and other disorders that start from an unconditioned mentality. In addition to completing the explanation, this paper aims to train the author's ability to make the best possible writing such as written works that have been widely published in the mass media today so that the ability to compile a written work must be owned by current students as a provision for the future.

The hypothesis formed in achieving the purpose of writing this paper is that the presence of toxic friendships or friendship relationships that do not have a good or correct influence will make the individual or someone's mentality disturbed. We can see today that there are many toxic friendships that were originally built through communication, good friendships, but in the end there are actions to bring down someone's mentality through actions, speech, and many other ways for someone to suffer. Consciously or unconsciously a perpetrator often acts casually like one example

commands, hits, or likes to comment with a dropping comment. The perpetrator always feels that indeed his actions and utterances are always correct and must be justified. So that the victim can only accept it because the argument of the perpetrator who feels confident that he is right is interspersed with emotional self-demeanor, does not like to be commented on, wants to be a person who can manage others so that he can do various things casually. So the emergence of toxic friendship often interferes with the mental health of a friend as a victim.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The first author with the title "*Perilaku Komunikasi Toxic Friendship dengan Teman Sebaya*" by Amin et. al., (2020) explained about toxic friendships that begin with communication. The author uses the S-O-R theory or commonly known as the stimulus-organism- response theory. In the explanation, the author fully explains what toxic friendship is, characteristics, and the impact affected by toxic friendship. In addition to explaining toxic friendship communication, the author also explained the quality of friendship, aspects, factors, and qualities of a friendship. The focus of research in this study is focused on the study of Toxic Friendship communication behavior with peers at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Muhammadiyah Makassar. The author explains the factors that cause a person to become a toxic friend, namely self-confidence, challenges of familiarity, understanding cues, depression, and personality. These factors can be formed due to biological factors, namely social behavior guided by rules that have been genetically programmed in the human psyche within the family sphere. Secondly, the sociological factor is the external environmental factor of the family because the human being is a social being, from social processes he acquires some characteristics that influence his behavior.

The second work entitled *The Influence of Friendship Quality and Self-Esteem on Happiness in Students* by Hapsari and Ima (2022). In this article, it is explained that women often experience negative emotions, especially internalizing disorder, namely experiencing negative emotions in themselves. Women not only experience emotions, but also express these emotions. Emotions that are often experienced by women are sadness, fear, anxiety, shame, and guilt (Brody & Hall, 2010). In the paper, it was explained that researchers also categorized the variables of happiness, quality of friendship, and self-esteem in students. The findings obtained by happiness in students are included in the moderate category with a percentage of 77%, the quality of friendship in students is included in the moderate category with a percentage of 73%, and self-esteem in students is included in the moderate category with a percentage of 73%. The results of the study also show the importance of happiness for students. The quality of friendship and self-esteem has an influence on happiness in students. The more the quality of friendship and self-esteem increases, the happiness of students will also increase. The research method used is a quantitative method with a survey method.

The third paper is entitled "*Mental Health Problems in the Covid-19*" Period by Santoso (2021). It is explained that the mental health problem that is felt by various people in the world but not directly realized by them is panic buying. Panic buying is a type of mental problem that arises from the anxiety of people whose countries are affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Panic buying itself is a situation where many people suddenly buy as much food, fuel, etc. as possible because they are worried about

something bad that might happen. It was explained the importance of maintaining mentality during the Covid-19 pandemic. The importance of mental health is not necessarily realized by many people, but because this pandemic lasts for a long time, everyone realizes the importance of maintaining a healthy mental state. During the Covid-19 pandemic that hit most countries in the world, people began to worry about their lives, their families, their close friends and even the environment. Another factor is stress due to social isolation or physical distancing. Excessive anxiety during quarantine can increase the risk of symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress. This study aims to provide information about mental problems or disorders that occur during the Covid-19 outbreak. This research uses qualitative research methods that are library research.

The fourth study entitled "*Kekerasan dalam Toxic Friendship antara Perempuan pada Novel Antéchrista by Amélie Nothomb*" studied by Intan, et. al., (2021). In this paper, some of the above authors reviewed novels that explained toxic friendships. The definition of 'Antéchrista' or 'antichrist' in the context of Christianity, can mean a person or power that is 'against Christ' in the sense of opposing His duties and work. In another sense, it can refer to a person or a power that takes the place of Christ or is a 'false Christ'. The short story in the novel is about Blanche who is a shy and aloof girl. He meets a popular, attractive, and fan-owned girl, Christa. The differences between the two make Christa friendly with Blanche. At first he felt happy to be friends with popular girls. However, Blanche plays tricks on her best friend later discovering that Christa is tricking Blanche's parents. Moreover, the popular girl ruined her life. At the end of the novel, it is revealed that Blanche decided to overcome her insecurities and fears of deception by fighting back. The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative.

The fifth paper entitled Mental Health Promotion Using Social Media (Instagram) for Adolescents During the Covid-19 Pandemic by Muntaha, et. al., (n.d.). In this paper, it is explained that this article aims to provide health promotion or mental health education through this Instagram platform because this application can be widely accessed, especially by teenagers, so that with this mental health education can help adolescents to balance social media and social interaction so that they are not easily stressed and anxious because in this pandemic era, Many conditions have changed, especially in daily activities. Maintaining mental health by making adjustments can start with cultivating a mindset and motivation. For self-growing influences, another factor is the environment. Avoid toxic circles as best you can. Surrounding environments such as family scope and friendships affect mental health depending on the way we interact and react with each other and how we accept and interpret them whether they are positive or negative.

In conclusion, the literature collectively emphasizes the intricate connections between communication, friendship quality, mental health, and environmental factors. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for fostering positive relationships and promoting mental well-being, especially in challenging circumstances such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

## METHODS

The variable measured is the extent to which toxic friendship can affect students' mental health by using the Variable Toxic Friendship. Then there are indicators in it,

namely S-O-R, namely Stimulus, Organism, and Response. In the Mental Health Variable, then there are indicators in it, namely the ability to face problems, satisfaction in friendships, and happiness in friendships. Where the results of each variable and indicator we use as a benchmark to find the results of the research studied.

This type of research is quantified research with a mixed method approach. Then the technique used to conduct surveys on this research is to disseminate questionnaires directly and indirectly. The population in this study is 226 all students of the Faculty of Communication and Multimedia Sciences Class of 2021. Meanwhile, the samples were taken with a simple random sampling technique, where the sample numbered 135, namely students who had experienced toxic friendship.

Data was collected from 135 respondents using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. First of all, researchers distributed questionnaires to a trial sample of 20 students outside the research sample. This sample is used to determine the degree of reliability and the validity of the instrument. After the instrument is valid and reliable, the researcher continues the survey stage to 135 students as a research sample. The second data analysis was used to determine the influence of independent variables on dependent variables analyzed using linear regression analysis, while differences in perception between categories of research samples were carried out with independent sample t-Test analysis.

## RESULTS

### Respondent Profile

In this study, there were 135 respondents who contributed to representing the research population, namely students of the Faculty of Communication and Multimedia Sciences, Mercu Buana University Yogyakarta Class of 2021. Of the 135 respondents, 51 respondents were male and 84 respondents were female.

### Validity and Reliability Test

Testing the validity and reliability of research instruments using trial samples where these test samples are outside of the research samples. The number of samples that became the trial was as many as 20 students. The following are the results of the validity of the trial sample on variable X and Variable Y of the study.

**Table 1.** Test of Validity

Variable X	Nilai <i>Pearson Product Moment</i>	Variable Y	Nilai <i>Pearson Product Moment</i>
Item 1	0.533	Item 1	0.539
Item 2	-0.084	Item 2	0.094
Item 3	0.598	Item 3	0.545
Item 4	-0.069	Item 4	0.718
Item 5	0.531	Item 5	0.343
Item 6	0.489	Item 6	0.042
Item 7	0.542	Item 7	0.460
Item 8	0.616	Item 8	0.365
Item 9	0.593	Item 9	-0.175
Item 10	0.697	Item 10	0.270
Item 11	0.303	Item 11	-0.049
Item 12	0.499	Item 12	0.525

Item 13	0.824	Item 13	0.600
Item 14	0.390	Item 14	0.017
Item 15	0.391	Item 15	0.216

Based on the data presented in table 1, it shows that each item in variable X and variable Y has different *Pearson Product Moment* values there are greater than r tables ( $df = 20-2 = 18$  and Sig. 0.05) which is 0.444 and there is a smaller than r table ( $df = 20-2 = 18$  and Sig. 0.05) which is 0.444, so that of the two variables X and a valid variable Y a number of 10 items for variable X and 6 items for variable Y indicating a value greater than r of the table ( $df = 20-2 = 18$  and Sig. 0.05) which is 0.444.

Because these items have been said to be valid, it is continued with the reliability instrument test. The test results show that the value of *Cronbach's Alpha* in variable X is 0.831 which means it is greater than the table R of 0.444, therefore variable X is declared reliable. Meanwhile, *Cronbach's Alpha* in variable Y is 0.667 which means it is greater than the table's R which is 0.444. Thus, the variable Y is also declared reliable.

### Linear Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is performed after the analysis prerequisites are met. In the analysis requirements test this time, normality and linearity tests were carried out on variable X and variable Y. Kolmogoriv-Smirnov normality test results with the help of SPSS showed the results of Sig values. variable X is  $0.004 < 0.05$  so variable X is abnormally distributed. In addition, the value of Sig. in variable Y is  $0.000 < 0.05$  so variable Y is also abnormally distributed.

Then, a linearity test was carried out and the results showed that the value of Sig. the *deviation from linearity* is  $0.314 > 0.05$  which means that the variable X and variable Y have a linear relationship. After the prerequisite analysis has been met, it is continued with regression analysis. The regression analysis itself was carried out with the aim of determining the level of influence of each independent variable, namely Stimulus (Message), Organism (Communicant), and Response (Effect) on variable X (Toxic Friendship) on the dependent variable, namely variable Y (Mental Health). The following are the results of the regression analysis presented in the table below.

**Table 2.** Test of Regression Linear

Variable	Standardized Coefficient	R Square	Itself
Stimulus (Message)	0,143	0,021	0,097
Organism (Komunikan)	0,162	0,026	0,061
Response (Effect)	0,173	0,030	0,044
R Square		0,041	

The Stimulus (Message) variable shows a significant value of  $0.097 > 0.05$  with a beta coefficient of **0.143**. This shows that the Stimulus (Message) variable has no effect on the Mental Health variable (Ho received). The Organism Variable (Communicant) showed significant values of  $0.061 > 0.05$  with a beta coefficient of **0.162**. This suggests that the Organism (Communicant) variable has no effect on the Mental Health variable (Ho accepted). The Response Variable (Effect) showed a significant value of  $0.044 > 0.05$  with a beta coefficient of **0.173**. This suggests that the Response (Effect) variable has no effect on the Mental Health variable (Ho accepted). The squared R coefficient in the linear regression test results is **0.041** which means that 4.1% of Mental Health variables

can be explained and are not influenced by independent variables, namely Stimulus (Message), Organism (Communicant), and Response (Effect) while (100%-4.1% = 95.9%) the rest is influenced by other variables that have not been studied.

## DISCUSSION

The outcomes of the linear regression analysis reveal a lack of significant impact of toxic friendships on the mental health of students enrolled in the Faculty of Mercu Buana University Yogyakarta Class of 2021. Evidently, friendships established among students in the Faculty of Communication and Multimedia Sciences at UMBY do not exhibit tendencies toward toxicity, thereby mitigating the potential disruption of mental well-being.

The correlation analysis between variable X, denoting Toxic Friendship, and variable Y, representing Mental Health, indicates a mere 4.1% association between these variables, signifying a notably weak relationship. This suggests that the Stimulus (Message), Organism (Communicant), and Response (Effect) variables do not strongly correlate with Mental Health. Notably, this study unveils additional insights, revealing that a majority of respondents exhibit adept problem-solving skills within their friendship circles. The absence of concealed issues contributes to the attainment of satisfaction and happiness in friendships for most students.

Consequently, the findings indicate that students from the Faculty of Communication and Multimedia Sciences Class of 2021 foster a healthy friendship environment. This conclusion is drawn from the absence of individuals displaying psychological behaviors veering into the negative realm, thereby safeguarding the mental health of the student community.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, the findings of this study indicate that the presence of toxic relationships within friendships does not significantly impact the mental health of students belonging to Fikomm Students Class 21. The analysis encompassing both male and female respondents reveals a consensus that the existence of toxic friendships does not exert discernible effects on the mental well-being of individuals enrolled in the Faculty of Communication and Multimedia Sciences Class of 2021. Consequently, the investigated variables demonstrate a lack of potential to influence toxic relationships within friendships, thereby minimizing their potential impact on mental health. The implications underscore the importance of discernment in cultivating relationships, emphasizing the necessity to refrain from engaging in detrimental and harmful friendships. The study advocates for fostering positive connections that contribute to personal growth and positive change while concurrently encouraging the collective construction and enhancement of spiritual well-being.

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