

Gendered Psychological Responses to Dating Violence and NSSI

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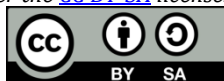
Keywords:

*Dating Violence
Self-Harm Tendencies
Male and Female
Perspectives
Early Adulthood
Mental Health*

ABSTRACT

Dating violence is a growing social and psychological concern among emerging adults and may lead to various mental health problems, including self-harm behavior. Self-harm refers to intentional self-injury performed without suicidal intent and is often used as a maladaptive strategy to regulate emotional distress. This study aims to understand the experiences and tendencies of self-harm among male and female victims of dating violence in emerging adulthood from their respective perspectives. The research employed a qualitative approach using thematic analysis to explore participants' psychological experiences. Participants consisted of six young adults aged 18–25 years who had experienced violence within romantic relationships. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using the thematic analysis framework. The findings indicate that both male and female victims experienced emotional distress following dating violence, including feelings of anxiety, sadness, and loss of self-control. Variations were observed in how participants expressed and managed their emotional distress. Female participants tended to internalize emotional pain and reported stronger tendencies toward self-harm behaviors as a coping mechanism. In contrast, male participants were more likely to express distress through externalizing behaviors such as anger or withdrawal. These findings emphasize the importance of understanding diverse psychological responses based on individual perspectives. This study contributes to the development of more inclusive and sensitive mental health interventions for victims of dating violence. It provides insight into the psychological dynamics of emerging adults experiencing abusive relationships.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Emerging adulthood represents a critical developmental stage characterized by identity exploration, emotional instability, and increasing independence in interpersonal relationships (Arnett, 2000). This developmental period is particularly important because individuals begin to establish romantic relationships that significantly influence psychological development, emotional regulation, and social adjustment (Erikson, 1968). However, while romantic relationships can foster emotional growth, they may also expose individuals to interpersonal conflict and unhealthy relational patterns, including dating violence. According to Matud et al. (2023) and Miller and Decker (2019), dating violence, defined as physical, psychological, or emotional aggression within romantic relationships, has emerged as a significant issue due to its increasing prevalence and serious psychological consequences.

Dating violence has been widely recognized as a global concern due to its strong association with adverse mental health outcomes. Individuals who experience dating violence are at higher risk of psychological distress, depression, anxiety, and emotional dysregulation (Acar, 2024; Piolanti et al., 2023). Moreover, both victims and perpetrators may experience long-term interpersonal and emotional difficulties, indicating that dating violence is not only a relational issue but also a psychological one (Dardis et al., 2015; Perrin et al., 2024). The rapid development of digital communication has further intensified this issue through the emergence of cyber dating violence, complicating relational dynamics among emerging adults (Redondo et al., 2024). These findings highlight the importance of understanding not only the prevalence of dating violence but also its underlying psychological mechanisms and consequences.

One of the most critical psychological consequences associated with dating violence is non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI), which refers to deliberate self-inflicted harm without suicidal intent (Klonsky, 2007). Within the framework of emotion regulation theory, NSSI is conceptualized as a maladaptive coping strategy for managing overwhelming emotional distress (Klonsky, 2007; Nock, 2009; Sabrina & Afiatin, 2023). Theoretical perspectives suggest that individuals engage in NSSI to regulate negative affect, reduce psychological tension, and regain a sense of control over distressing emotional states. Exposure to dating violence can trigger emotional dysregulation, feelings of helplessness, and negative self-evaluation, which increase vulnerability to engaging in NSSI

behaviors as a form of coping (Bandara et al., 2024; Devries et al., 2013; Turner et al., 2012). This indicates that the relationship between dating violence and self-harm is not merely correlational but is mediated by psychological mechanisms, particularly difficulties in emotion regulation and maladaptive coping processes. Although NSSI may temporarily reduce emotional distress, it is associated with long-term psychological risks, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation (Hawton et al., 2012).

Gender differences further shape how individuals experience dating violence and respond to emotional distress. Previous studies indicate that women are more likely to internalize distress and report higher psychological impact, whereas men tend to suppress emotional expression due to social expectations and gender norms (Diggins et al., 2024; Turan & Duy, 2020). From a theoretical perspective, gender role theory suggests that social constructions of masculinity and femininity influence emotional expression and coping behaviors (Connell, 2005; Hyde, 2005). These differences can influence coping strategies, including the likelihood of engaging in maladaptive behaviors such as NSSI. These differences can influence coping strategies, including the likelihood of engaging in maladaptive behaviors such as NSSI. In the Indonesian sociocultural context, gender norms also play a significant role in shaping emotional expression and help-seeking behavior. Research suggests that women tend to report stronger emotional consequences of relationship violence, while men are less likely to disclose psychological distress due to stigma and cultural expectations (Barenns & Swandi, 2023; Pratama, 2024). This indicates that sociocultural factors are not merely contextual but actively shape the psychological processes underlying dating violence and self-harm.

Within the Indonesian context, as a Muslim-majority society, religious values and Islamic teachings may also influence how individuals interpret and cope with emotional distress. Islamic psychological perspectives emphasize concepts such as *sabr* (patience), *tawakkul* (trust in God), and reliance on spiritual practices as adaptive coping mechanisms that support emotional regulation and resilience (Hamdan, 2008; Abu-Raiya, 2012). In addition, Islamic counseling approaches highlight the integration of spiritual and psychological dimensions in addressing mental health issues (Rothman & Coyle, 2018). These values can shape how individuals regulate emotions, respond to interpersonal conflict, and make meaning of distressing experiences, including dating violence and self-injurious behaviors. Therefore, integrating psychological and Islamic

perspectives is important for developing a more comprehensive and culturally relevant understanding of the phenomenon.

Despite the growing body of literature, several important gaps remain. Existing studies predominantly focus on general associations between dating violence and psychological outcomes, with limited attention to the subjective experiences and meaning-making processes of individuals. Furthermore, research that specifically examines NSSI among victims of dating violence using a gendered perspective remains limited, particularly in non-Western contexts such as Indonesia (Taquette & Monteiro, 2021). Previous studies also tend to lack theoretical integration, failing to explain the psychological mechanisms linking dating violence and self-harm clearly. In addition, most existing research employs quantitative approaches, which may not adequately capture the complexity of lived experiences and emotional processes. These limitations indicate the need for a more in-depth, contextually grounded, and theoretically informed investigation.

Given these limitations, a qualitative approach is considered appropriate as it allows for an in-depth exploration of individuals' lived experiences, emotional processes, and subjective interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative methods enable researchers to capture nuanced gender differences and culturally embedded meanings that are often overlooked in quantitative studies. Therefore, this approach is particularly suitable for understanding how individuals experience dating violence and how these experiences relate to the emergence of NSSI.

Based on the identified gaps, this study aims to explore non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) among individuals in emerging adulthood who have experienced dating violence in Indonesia. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How do individuals in emerging adulthood experience and interpret dating violence in their romantic relationships? (2) How does exposure to dating violence contribute to the emergence of NSSI as a coping mechanism? Moreover, (3) how do gender differences shape the experience and meaning of NSSI among victims of dating violence? These research questions provide a clear and measurable direction for the study while addressing the identified theoretical and empirical gaps.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design using an interpretive approach with thematic analysis as the primary analytical framework. This approach is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm that seeks to understand how individuals construct meaning from their lived experiences, particularly in relation to self-harm (non-suicidal self-injury/NSSI) among victims of dating violence. Qualitative methods are appropriate for exploring complex psychological phenomena that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measures, especially when focusing on subjective experiences, emotional processes, and meaning-making (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study focused on emerging adults aged 18–25 years, a developmental stage characterized by identity exploration and emotional instability (Arnett, 2000). Participants were required to have experienced at least one form of dating violence. In this study, dating violence was defined comprehensively to include physical, psychological, emotional, and relational aggression within romantic relationships, consistent with prior literature (Matud et al., 2023; Miller & Decker, 2019). This expanded definition ensures alignment with the conceptual framework presented in the Introduction.

Participants were recruited using purposive and snowball sampling techniques through social media platforms (Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter/X, and TikTok). Snowball sampling was used due to the sensitive nature of the topic, as individuals with such experiences are often difficult to access. However, this method may introduce selection bias, as participants are likely to come from similar social networks. This limitation has been acknowledged, as it may affect the transferability of findings.

A total of six participants (three male and three female) were included in the study. Although the sample size is relatively small, it is considered adequate within a qualitative framework that prioritizes depth over breadth. Data saturation was achieved when no new themes or significant insights emerged from subsequent interviews. The inclusion of both male and female participants was intended to capture gendered perspectives rather than to perform statistical comparisons.

The screening process was conducted using an online form that assessed eligibility against inclusion criteria, including age, gender, and experience of dating violence. Participants who met the criteria were contacted for further participation. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection.

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, allowing flexibility while maintaining consistency across participants. The

interview guide included key questions such as: (1) “Can you describe your experience in the relationship?” (2) “What forms of conflict or violence did you experience?” (3) “How did these experiences affect your emotions?” (4) “Have you ever engaged in behaviors to cope with emotional distress?” (5) “Can you describe any self-harm-related experiences or thoughts?” Follow-up probing questions were used to explore participants’ responses in greater depth. All interviews were conducted individually, recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. The process involved: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading, (2) generating initial codes systematically across the dataset, (3) organizing codes into potential themes, (4) reviewing and refining themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report supported by representative quotations. To enhance analytical rigor, coding was conducted iteratively, and an audit trail was maintained to document analytic decisions. Peer debriefing was also conducted to ensure consistency and credibility of the coding process.

Researcher reflexivity was explicitly considered to minimize bias. The researcher acknowledged personal assumptions and maintained reflective notes throughout the research process to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in participants’ narratives. This process supports transparency and enhances the credibility of qualitative findings.

To ensure trustworthiness, this study adopted qualitative criteria including credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement with the data and member checking, in which participants were allowed to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations. Dependability was addressed by maintaining a clear audit trail of the research process, while confirmability was supported through reflexive journaling and peer review. These strategies replaced inappropriate quantitative terminology previously used.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study.

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board prior to data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their rights, and the voluntary nature of participation. Written informed consent was obtained. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used, and all identifying information

was removed. Data were stored securely and accessed only by the researcher.

Given the sensitive nature of the topic, additional safeguards were implemented. Participants were allowed to pause or withdraw from the interview at any time. If emotional distress was observed, the interview was stopped, and participants were offered support and referral to professional services when necessary.

Figure 1 illustrates the research flow, including participant recruitment, screening, data collection, and analysis procedures.



Figure 1. Research Workflow Diagram

3. RESULTS

This study explored non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) among individuals in emerging adulthood who had experienced dating violence, with particular attention to gendered experiences and emotional coping processes. The findings are presented through four interconnected themes: (1) emotional violence as a dominant relational dynamic, (2) psychological consequences and emotional dysregulation, (3) the emergence of NSSI as a coping mechanism, and (4) gendered patterns of

emotional expression. The relationship between themes and psychological processes identified in this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Relationship Between Dating Violence, Emotional Dysregulation, and NSSI Tendencies
A Thematic Model Based on Participants' Narratives (n = 6)

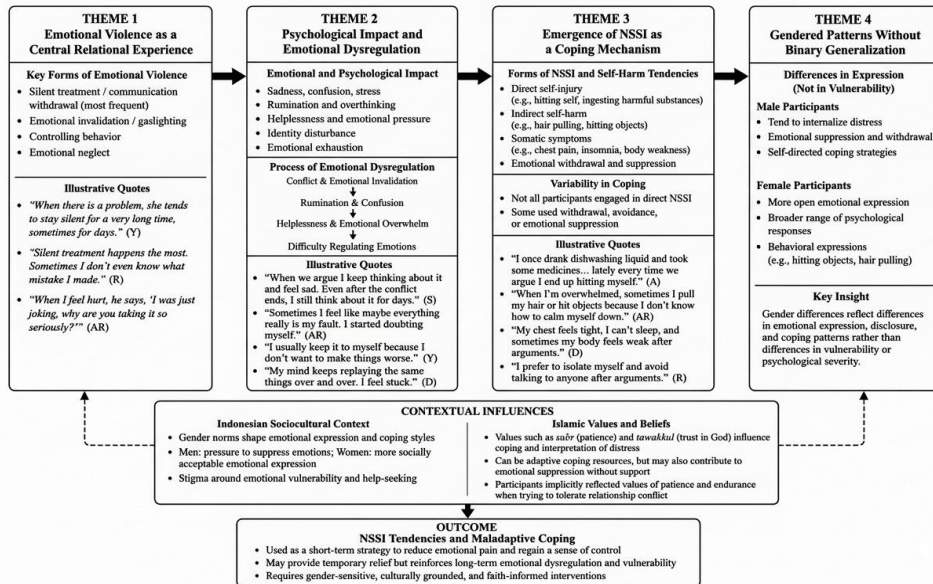


Figure 2. Relationship Between Dating Violence, Emotional Dysregulation, and NSSI Tendencies

3.1: Emotional Violence as a Central Relational Experience

Emotional violence, particularly in the form of silent treatment, emerged as the most consistent experience across participants regardless of gender. Participants described repeated communication withdrawal, prolonged silence, emotional neglect, and invalidation as central patterns within their romantic relationships. These experiences were not perceived as isolated conflicts but as recurring relational dynamics that gradually affected participants' emotional well-being and sense of security in the relationship.

Participant Y stated:

"When there is a problem, she tends to stay silent for a very long time, sometimes for days."

Similarly, Participant R explained:

"Silent treatment happens the most. Sometimes I do not even know what mistake I made."

These accounts indicate that emotional withdrawal functioned as a form of psychological control that generated confusion, uncertainty, and emotional instability. The absence of communication led participants to question themselves and anticipate relational rejection continually.

Female participants additionally described experiences of emotional invalidation and controlling behavior. Participant AR stated:

“When I feel hurt, he says, ‘I was just joking, why are you taking it so seriously?’”

This statement reflects a pattern of gaslighting in which emotional reactions were minimized and dismissed, causing participants to doubt the legitimacy of their own emotional experiences.

Importantly, not all participants interpreted emotional violence in the same way. Some participants initially normalized silent treatment and controlling behaviors as ordinary relationship conflicts before gradually recognizing their psychological impact.

Overall, these findings suggest that dating violence in this study was predominantly characterized by subtle yet persistent emotional and psychological mechanisms rather than overt physical aggression. Emotional violence functioned as a relational process that progressively undermined emotional stability, self-worth, and interpersonal trust.

3.2: Psychological Impact and Emotional Dysregulation

All participants reported experiencing significant psychological distress following exposure to dating violence. The emotional consequences included sadness, confusion, stress, emotional pressure, rumination, helplessness, and emotional exhaustion. These responses were not temporary emotional reactions but rather developed into persistent psychological conditions that affected participants’ daily functioning and capacity for emotional regulation.

Participant S explained:

“When we argue, I keep thinking about it and feel sad. Even after the conflict ends, I still think about it for days.”

This statement reflects prolonged rumination and difficulty disengaging from emotionally distressing experiences. Similarly, Participant AR described emotional confusion and identity disturbance:

“Sometimes I feel like maybe everything really is my fault. I started doubting myself.”

Male participants tended to describe distress more restrainedly. Participant Y stated:

“I usually keep it to myself because I do not want to make things worse.”

Although expressed differently, this response also reflects emotional burden and difficulty processing distress adaptively.

The findings indicate that emotional dysregulation emerged through repeated cycles of conflict, emotional invalidation, and unresolved interpersonal tension. Participants described feeling overwhelmed, unable to regulate intrusive thoughts, and emotionally trapped within recurring relationship conflicts. Several participants described a cyclical emotional process in which unresolved conflict triggered rumination, emotional exhaustion, helplessness, and eventually difficulty controlling emotional reactions.

Importantly, emotional dysregulation appeared to function as a central psychological mechanism linking dating violence and self-harm tendencies rather than merely as a secondary consequence of relationship problems. Repeated emotional harm gradually exceeded participants' coping capacities and increased vulnerability to maladaptive coping responses.

3.3: Emergence of NSSI as a Coping Mechanism

The findings reveal that NSSI emerged as a maladaptive coping strategy used to manage overwhelming emotional distress associated with dating violence. However, the manifestation of NSSI varied considerably across participants, indicating that self-harm should be understood as a spectrum of behaviors and tendencies rather than a single uniform construct.

Participant A explicitly described direct self-harm behavior:

"I once drank dishwashing liquid and took some medicines... lately every time we argue I end up hitting myself."

This statement demonstrates the use of self-injury as an immediate strategy for releasing emotional tension and coping with psychological pain.

Other participants demonstrated indirect forms of self-harm tendencies. Participant AR explained:

"When I am overwhelmed, sometimes I pull my hair or hit objects because I do not know how to calm myself down."

Participant D described experiencing physical symptoms during emotional distress:

"My chest feels tight, I cannot sleep, and sometimes my body feels weak after arguments."

Participant R also described emotional withdrawal after conflict:

“I prefer to isolate myself and avoid talking to anyone after arguments.”

These findings indicate that not all participants engaged in direct self-injury; however, all participants demonstrated maladaptive emotional coping responses associated with emotional dysregulation.

Importantly, the findings also suggest that self-harm tendencies cannot be reduced solely to observable physical injury. Internalized distress, emotional suppression, somatic complaints, and destructive emotional regulation patterns may also represent manifestations of vulnerability related to self-harm.

At the same time, not all participants progressed toward direct NSSI behaviors. Some participants attempted alternative coping strategies, such as withdrawal, avoidance, or emotional suppression, suggesting variability in coping trajectories among victims of dating violence.

3.4: Gendered Patterns Without Binary Generalization

The analysis revealed gender-related differences in how emotional distress and self-harm tendencies were expressed. However, these differences did not indicate that one gender was inherently more vulnerable than the other. Instead, the findings suggest differences in emotional processing, coping styles, and patterns of expression.

Male participants tended to internalize distress and describe emotional experiences in a more restrained manner. Emotional suppression, withdrawal, and self-directed coping strategies were more prominent among male participants.

In contrast, female participants described emotional experiences more openly. They articulated a broader range of psychological responses, including sadness, overthinking, emotional confusion, and behavioral expressions such as hitting objects or pulling hair.

Importantly, the findings do not support simplistic assumptions that women necessarily experience stronger self-harm tendencies than men. While a male participant explicitly reported direct NSSI behavior, female participants demonstrated multiple indirect forms of maladaptive coping and emotional dysregulation.

These findings therefore suggest that gender differences are better understood as differences in emotional expression, disclosure, and coping patterns rather than differences in psychological severity or vulnerability itself.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Emotional Violence as a Core Mechanism

The findings indicate that emotional violence, particularly silent treatment and emotional invalidation, functioned as central mechanisms shaping participants' psychological distress. Consistent with ostracism theory, repeated communication withdrawal threatens fundamental psychological needs such as belongingness, self-esteem, and emotional security (Sommer et al., 2001; Williams, 2001). However, unlike prior studies that conceptualize ostracism as a situational experience, the current findings demonstrate that silent treatment operated as a chronic relational pattern embedded within ongoing interpersonal dynamics.

This distinction is important because repeated emotional withdrawal may produce cumulative psychological harm rather than temporary distress. Participants described prolonged uncertainty, self-doubt, and emotional exhaustion caused by unresolved relational tension. Thus, emotional violence should not be understood merely as passive communication behavior but as a psychologically damaging relational process.

The findings also extend previous literature on psychological violence by illustrating how subtle relational dynamics such as emotional invalidation and gaslighting gradually undermine self-trust and emotional stability. This indicates that emotional violence can be equally psychologically harmful as overt physical aggression.

4.2 Emotional Dysregulation as the Link Between Dating Violence and NSSI

Consistent with emotion regulation theory, the findings suggest that NSSI emerged as a maladaptive coping strategy for overwhelming emotional distress (Klonsky, 2007; Sabrina & Afiatin, 2023). Exposure to dating violence contributed to emotional dysregulation through repeated cycles of conflict, invalidation, helplessness, and unresolved emotional tension.

Unlike quantitative studies that primarily establish statistical associations between dating violence and self-harm (Bandara et al., 2024; Devries et al., 2013), the present study provides qualitative insight into how emotional distress is internally experienced and transformed into maladaptive coping behavior. Participants described emotional pain not merely as an outcome of violence but as an ongoing psychological burden that progressively disrupted emotional regulation capacities.

Importantly, the findings reveal that self-harm tendencies extend beyond direct physical injury. Emotional suppression, cognitive

rumination, somatic symptoms, and destructive emotional coping may also represent manifestations of vulnerability associated with self-harm.

This finding contributes theoretically by expanding the operational understanding of NSSI tendencies within relational trauma contexts. Rather than conceptualizing self-harm solely as observable behavior, the findings support a broader understanding of maladaptive emotional coping processes.

4.3Reconsidering Gender Differences Beyond Simplistic Assumptions

The findings challenge simplistic assumptions suggesting that women necessarily exhibit stronger self-harm tendencies than men. While previous studies report a higher prevalence of self-harm among women (Diggins et al., 2024), the current findings demonstrate that gender differences are more complex and context-dependent.

The explicit report of direct NSSI behavior by a male participant suggests that self-harm among men may be underreported due to masculine norms discouraging emotional disclosure (Matud et al., 2023; Turan & Duy, 2020). Male participants tended to internalize emotional distress and avoid openly expressing vulnerability, which may contribute to reduced visibility of psychological suffering.

At the same time, female participants described emotional distress more openly and articulated more varied emotional responses. However, greater emotional expression should not automatically be interpreted as greater psychological severity. It is possible that differences in emotional disclosure patterns influenced how distress was communicated during interviews, rather than reflecting actual differences in psychological burden.

These findings therefore suggest that gender differences in self-harm are better understood as differences in emotional expression, coping, socialization, and disclosure practices rather than inherent differences in vulnerability.

4.4Indonesian Sociocultural and Islamic Context

The findings should also be interpreted within the Indonesian sociocultural context, where emotional expression and gender roles are strongly influenced by cultural expectations (Barens & Swandi, 2023; Pratama, 2024). Men may experience social pressure to suppress vulnerability and maintain emotional control, whereas women may have relatively more socially acceptable opportunities for emotional expression. Additionally, Islamic values such as *sabr* (patience), *tawakkul* (trust in God), and spiritual endurance may influence how individuals interpret emotional suffering and relational conflict. While these values may function as adaptive coping resources, they may also

unintentionally contribute to emotional suppression when distress is endured without adequate psychological support.

Interestingly, several participants implicitly reflected values of patience and emotional endurance in their descriptions of attempts to tolerate relationship conflict.

Therefore, interventions within Muslim-majority contexts such as Indonesia should integrate culturally sensitive and faith-informed approaches that encourage adaptive emotional regulation while also promoting healthy emotional disclosure and help-seeking behavior.

4.5 Study Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the small sample size limits the transferability of findings, although qualitative research prioritizes depth of understanding over statistical generalization. Second, the use of snowball sampling may introduce selection bias because participants may share relatively similar social environments and experiences.

Third, the reliance on self-reported narratives raises the possibility of social desirability bias, particularly regarding sensitive experiences such as self-harm and emotional vulnerability. Male participants, for example, may have underreported emotional experiences due to stigma surrounding masculinity and emotional disclosure.

Finally, the cross-sectional nature of the interviews limits the ability to examine how emotional coping and self-harm tendencies may evolve.

4.6 Practical and Theoretical Implications

The findings highlight the importance of developing gender-sensitive and culturally grounded interventions targeting emotional dysregulation as a key mechanism underlying self-harm tendencies among victims of dating violence.

Practically, counselors and mental health practitioners should focus not only on direct self-harm behaviors but also on early signs of emotional dysregulation, such as chronic rumination, emotional suppression, withdrawal, and maladaptive coping responses. University counseling services and youth mental health programs may benefit in particular from incorporating emotional regulation training and trauma-informed relationship education.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature by integrating emotion regulation theory, gender perspectives,

and sociocultural context in explaining the relationship between dating violence and NSSI.

Furthermore, integrating Islamic psychological approaches, including spiritual coping, faith-based counseling, and emotionally supportive religious practices, may strengthen intervention effectiveness within Muslim-majority contexts such as Indonesia. Psychoeducation programs focusing on healthy emotional communication, conflict resolution, and adaptive coping strategies may help reduce vulnerability to emotional dysregulation and self-harm among emerging adults.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) tendencies among emerging adults who experienced dating violence, with particular attention to gendered emotional experiences and coping processes. The findings demonstrate that emotional violence, especially silent treatment, emotional invalidation, and communication withdrawal, emerged as the dominant relational dynamics experienced by participants. Both male and female participants reported significant psychological distress, including sadness, confusion, emotional exhaustion, helplessness, and difficulties in emotional regulation.

The findings further indicate that emotional dysregulation functioned as a central psychological mechanism linking dating violence and self-harm tendencies. While only one participant explicitly reported direct NSSI behavior, all participants demonstrated maladaptive coping responses such as emotional suppression, rumination, withdrawal, somatic complaints, hitting objects, or hair pulling. These findings suggest that self-harm tendencies should be understood not only as observable self-injury behaviors but also as broader patterns of emotional dysregulation and destructive coping.

This study also identified gender-related differences in emotional expression and coping processes. Male participants tended to internalize emotional distress through suppression and withdrawal, whereas female participants expressed emotional experiences more openly and described more varied emotional responses. However, the findings do not support simplistic assumptions that one gender is inherently more vulnerable to self-harm than the other. Instead, gender differences appear to reflect variations in emotional expression, disclosure practices, and coping socialization. (Reviewer 1 and 2)

The findings contribute theoretically by integrating emotion regulation theory, relational trauma perspectives, and sociocultural context in understanding the relationship between dating violence and

NSSI. In addition, the study highlights the importance of interpreting emotional coping within Indonesian sociocultural and Islamic contexts, where emotional restraint, patience, and gender expectations may shape how individuals respond to psychological distress. (reviewer 1 and 2)

Practically, the findings emphasize the importance of gender-sensitive and culturally grounded mental health interventions. Prevention programs should focus not only on physical violence but also on emotional violence and maladaptive emotional coping patterns. Counselors, educators, and mental health practitioners should pay greater attention to emotional dysregulation, rumination, withdrawal, and emotional suppression as potential indicators of vulnerability among victims of dating violence. (Reviewers 1 and 2)

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The small sample size and use of snowball sampling limit the transferability of the findings. In addition, reliance on self-reported narratives may be influenced by social desirability bias, particularly regarding emotional vulnerability and self-harm disclosure. The cross-sectional nature of the interviews also limits understanding of how emotional coping and NSSI tendencies develop over time. (Reviewers 1 and 2)

Future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse participant groups, longitudinal approaches, and deeper exploration of sociocultural, religious, and gender-related factors influencing emotional coping and self-harm tendencies among victims of dating violence. Further studies may also examine protective factors, such as social support, spirituality, and adaptive emotion regulation strategies, to reduce vulnerability to NSSI among emerging adults. (reviewer 1 and 2)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to all participants who were willing to share their personal experiences for this research. Their openness and willingness to participate made this study possible. The authors also thank all individuals who contributed to the completion of this research.

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