

## Dating Violence: An Overview of Help-Seeking Behavior, Trust in Authority, and Peer Support

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### Abstract

Dating violence is increasing every day and continues to constitute a social problem. Students are a social group with the highest risk of becoming victims. Furthermore, not all victims are willing to report these cases. Previous studies show that victims of dating violence are reluctant to report it as they may not receive good treatment. This study aims to explore the forms of dating violence, victims, directions for seeking help, trust in campus authorities, peer support, and intercorrelations. It involves a correlational quantitative method with 225 students taken based on purposive random sampling. This study also uses a scale of conflict in dating, friend support, choice of support, and trust in authority. The results showed that most of the violence experienced by victims is psychological. Victims tend to seek help from informal parties such as friends, family, and partners, instead of formal parties such as doctors, psychologists, police, or lecturers. Trust in campus authorities tends to be moderate, and the majority feel support from friends. Furthermore, positive and negative correlations were observed between the variables and their dimensions.

**Keywords:** dating violence, help-seeking behavior, friend support, trust in authority

### Abstrak

Kekerasan dalam berpacaran makin hari makin meningkat jumlah dan keseriusannya. Mahasiswa merupakan pihak yang berisiko tinggi menjadi korban. Namun, tidak semua korban bersedia melaporkan kekerasan yang dialami. Berbagai penelitian terdahulu menunjukkan bahwa korban kekerasan dalam berpacaran enggan melaporkan karena mereka tidak akan mendapat perlakuan baik. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi bentuk-bentuk kekerasan dalam berpacaran pada korban, arah mencari bantuan, kepercayaan pada otoritas kampus, dan dukungan teman sebaya serta interkorelasinya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif korelasional. Subjek berjumlah 225 mahasiswa, yang diambil berdasarkan *puspositive random sampling*. Digunakan skala konflik dalam berpacaran, dukungan teman, pemilihan dukungan dan kepercayaan pada otoritas. Hasil menunjukkan kekerasan paling banyak dialami korban adalah kekerasan psikologis. Korban lebih cenderung mencari bantuan pihak informal seperti teman, keluarga dan pacar dibandingkan pihak formal seperti dokter, psikolog, polisi atau dosen. Kepercayaan pada otoritas kampus cenderung moderat, serta mayoritas merasakan dukungan dari teman. Lebih lanjut ditemukan korelasi positif maupun negatif antarvariabel serta dimensinya.

**Kata Kunci:** kekerasan dalam pacaran, perilaku mencari bantuan, dukungan teman, kepercayaan pada otoritas

### Introduction

Dating violence is a form of gender-based fierceness against women. This may take the form of betrayal, sexual harassment, beatings, breaking promises, and even rape (Pitawati, 2008). In 2017, violence against women totaled 13,384 cases recorded, 9,609 (71%) were in the private sphere, with 1,873 cases being in dating (National Commission Against Violence Against Women, 2018). In

2020, there was an increase to 2,341 cases (National Commission on Violence Against Women, 2021). Furthermore, students in educational cities are vulnerable to becoming victims (Sari, 2018).

Malang is an educational city that is highly vulnerable to the risks of violence against women, especially in dating. In 2021, the leadership of the Woman Crisis Center (WCC) reported that there were at least 14 victims of sexual violence in family and

personal relationships, where most cases in Malang were violence in dating and with exes (Rahadi, 2022). Dating violence is a phenomenon that follows the "iceberg" pattern. Furthermore, the reported data was smaller than the undisclosed data. Several cases in Malang City involved men asking their partners to find their virginity to have sex (Gunawan, 2015). Another form of violence is pregnancy outside of wedlock, without responsibility from the partner on the decision to dispose of the baby. In 2017, 7 cases occurred in Malang Regency (Mahiruni, 2017).

Currently, it is estimated that 200,000 out-of-town students are studying in Malang. This vulnerability to violence is caused by various factors, including the absence of parental supervision and a permissive society. The psychological side of the perpetrators and victims who are still unstable contribute to the development of this case.

Dating is an integral part of the college experience and is important for an individual's social development. Amar and Gennaro (2005) described dating as a "carefree period of romantic experimentation". However, it can be a complicated, painful, and dangerous experience in some cases. Furthermore, Amar and Alexy (2005) stated that few are aware of abuse and violence in relationships. Dating violence also referred to as a form of intimate partner fierceness, is equated with its dynamics observed between married couples or domestic violence (Roscoe & Benaske, 1985). It is described as physical, psychological, or sexual behavior by one partner against another intentionally, causing injury or pain (Sylaska & Edwards, 2014). Violence committed by men against women and between students in schools attracts significant public attention, but not many have raised the issue of dating violence in college. Its consequences often include deep psychological scars that have long-lasting ill effects on later romantic relationships. Durant et al. (2007) stated that victims may engage in risky behaviors such as alcohol or drug use,

which may impair academic performance and optimal quality of life.

When people think of dating violence, it describes a man's partner physically assaulting a woman. The view of biological theorists on violence in romantic relationships is that men are genetically predisposed to aggressive behavior. The feminist tradition also views violence in romantic relationships as a consequence of the dynamics of power and control of men's dominance over women (Anderson, 2005; Reed, 2008). On the other hand, studies show that dating violence is not a gender issue, but rather is understood from a social development framework that links romanticism and attachment variables as contributing factors to the violence dynamics (Sharpe & Taylor, 1999).

There are many studies on dating violence but are limited in the scope of male victims (for example Edwards et al., 2015). Several studies have reported the prevalence and types of violence experienced by male victims in heterosexual relationships (Ashley & Foshee, 2005). Due to the lack of literature on dating violence against males, few believe that men can also be victims.

There are 95% of the general population that has traditionally viewed women as victims of dating violence (Hamel & Nicholls, 2007). However, Ashley and Foshee (2005) have challenged this assumption. For example, in a study of adolescent couples in the United States and Canada, Brendgen et al. (2002) observed that 39% of adolescents were involved in physical violence during dating regardless of gender. Therefore, the study concluded: "Victims of dating violence are not solely a female phenomenon".

In a survey among the adolescent dating population, Ashley and Foshee (2005) reported a 25% prevalence in dating relationships with male and female partners who reported being both perpetrators and victims in the relationship. A contemporary study by Hamel and Nicholls (2007) found evidence to contradict previous studies on dating violence which claimed that the majority of victims were women. This

empirically demonstrates the victimization of men by female partners occurs at the same or greater frequency than that of women by male dating partners.

These victims have been discussed above from a gender perspective (Ashley & Foshee, 2005; Hamel & Nicholls, 2007), but little is known about the help-seeking behavior of male and female victims in college. Furthermore, there are problems when the victim does not disclose to the potential helper or the other person is unable to identify the case. One of the main reasons why victimization by dating violence has become a major social issue on campuses is that the majority of victims do not report the harassment (Ashley & Foshee, 2005; Demers et al., 2018; Edwards et al., 2015; Sylaska & Edwards, 2014). This promotes the assumption that dating violence does not exist, and is not a significant problem (Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2008).

Authorities or potential helpers believe that if physical, psychological, or sexual abuse is not reported, it does not exist. Consequently, it is nearly impossible for a potential helper to respond or intervene. Revictimization is possible due to the "disconnection" between the victim and the potential source of assistance.

Several studies have attempted to ascertain the reasons why victims of dating violence in heterosexual relationships do not seek help (Ashley & Foshee, 2005; Ocampo et al., 2007; Sylaska & Edwards, 2014; Vogel & Wei, 2005). It was observed that victims avoided seeking help due to shame and fear that the disclosure would not be kept secret, that abuse or violence would be overlooked by adults, stigma, or because many victims did not view abuse or violence as a significant problem in their relationship (Ashley & Foshee, 2005; Ocampo et al., 2007). Male victims of dating violence either deny or fail to report their experiences with their female partners because they may not perceive themselves as victims. This is largely the result of the widespread assumption that victimization by dating violence is a

phenomenon perpetrated by "men against women" (Ashley & Foshee, 2005; Diadiningrum & Endrijati, 2014; Reed, 2008). However, this assumption contradicts other studies (Anderson, 2005; Drijber et al., 2013; Dutton & White, 2013) which empirically established victimization by dating violence to occur regardless of a person's gender or sexual orientation.

Victims of dating violence may not report harassment to law enforcement officials or campus authorities either due to a lack of trust, or because they believe police officers will not be able to help them (Miller & Simpson, 1991). Felson et al. (2005) reported that 22% of women and 39% of men who were victims of dating violence did not seek the help of officials because they feared reprisals from their partners; 12% of women and 5% of men because they want to protect their partner; and 14% of women and 16% of men believe that if they report their victimization to the police, the police will do nothing to help (Buzawa et al., 2001).

Buzawa et al. (2001) also reported that women in dating relationships were less likely than men to call the police. Pirog-Good and Stets (1989) stated that women college students were more likely to report dating abuse or violence than male students. However, this statistic decreased with sex-related incidents of dating violence. In a study with a female student population, less than 5% reported incidents of rape to law enforcement officials (Wasserman, 2003), indicating a lack of widespread reporting of dating violence on college campuses.

Social problems arise when the victims cannot trust informal parties for example friends, parents, family, or formal parties such as psychologists, doctors, or police, for help. Ashley and Foshee (2005) examined help-seeking behavior between male and female perpetrators and victims of violence in heterosexual relationships and concluded that victims seek help from informal sources such as friends. However, seeking help from informal sources is better than nothing. This agrees with Ocampo et al. (2007) that

informal sources prefer not to be involved in courtship violence situations as the quality of their assistance is limited.

Similarly, the intimate relationship between the victim and the rescuer is a determining factor for individuals seeking help for various medical or psychological problems (Edwards et al., 2015). The results indicate the need for the availability of resources that are ready to provide a sense of security accessible to adolescent and adult victims (Vogel & Wei, 2005).

Handling on the victim's side was not optimal, and caused a more serious impact. Several factors contributed to the slow handling, including the victim's lack of confidence in asking for help from others and the fear of informing others about their experiences. Trust commitment theory has been used to understand differences in help-seeking behavior for medical and psychological problems, and the differences in these variables between victims have been extensively studied.

There is an interaction of complex factors that influence the victim's decision-making to report a case. These include the perceived support from other parties, trust in authority, and the severity of the violence (Wong & Christmann, 2008). In psychological dynamics, there are several aspects of decision-making, namely: intuition or subjective feelings, experience, information in the surrounding environment, authority, and rationality (Sambhara & Cahyanti, 2013).

Based on the studies above, dating violence can occur in both men and women. Emotional closeness becomes the motivation for seeking more help from informal parties such as friends, in place of formal parties such as experts. This is due to the lack of confidence in the parties receiving the report. Therefore, this study aims to explore forms of dating violence against victims, directions for seeking help, trust in campus authorities, and peer support as well as intercorrelations.

## Methods

### Design

This study uses a quantitative paradigm with a survey model as a data collection method. It includes variables related to the type of violence, help-seeking behavior, the party that is often asked for help, trust in authority, and peer support.

### Subject

This study involved 225 students at various universities in Malang. Subjects were taken through purposive random sampling based on the criteria for having been in a dating relationship, not married, and being listed as active students on campus. Furthermore, there were 132 women and 93 men, while the age of the subjects ranged from 18-27 years old.

### Instrument

#### *Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2)*

Dating violence was measured by the adaptation of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2) (Straus, 2017). This scale aims to ascertain the level of violence experienced and perpetrated by the subject, consisting of 39 pairs. It is divided into 2 parts: first, a description of violence committed by the partner, for example, "My partner once threw something that could hurt me") and second, describing the violence the subject did to the partner, for example, "I once threw something that could hurt my partner". Out of the 39, 2 pairs of items determined the reconciling, non-violent side of dating conflict, namely: "Still showing full attention when talking even though we are in disagreement" and "Agreeing to try a solution to the dispute suggested by the partner". In this study, the scale has a Cronbach's alpha value of .634 and the validity is between .301 - .481.

#### *General Help Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ)*

The measurement of the orientation of seeking help was adapted from the General Help Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ) (Wilson et al., 2005). This scale ascertains the parties who are considered to have the potential to assist victims. There were 9 parties in

question, namely partners, friends, parents, family members, psychologists, doctors, police, lecturers, and others. Furthermore, the scale has a Cronbach's alpha value of .738 and the validity is between .305 - .486.

### ***Trust in Campus Authority***

This scale aims to measure the trust level in campus authorities in handling cases of dating violence. It was developed from the Trust to Leader scale (Adams et al., 2008) consisting of 20 items that measure 4 aspects, namely: benevolence, predictability, integrity, and competency. In this study, the scale has a Cronbach alpha value of .812 and the validity is between .458 -.594. Examples of items include: "I believe that campus administrators have a strong motivation in fostering students".

### ***Peer Support***

This scale aims to measure the support students experience from their peers when dating. It consists of three aspects: emotional support, informative, and instrumental support, alongside 23 items with both favorable and unfavorable symptoms. In this study, the scale has a Cronbach's alpha value of .846 and the validity is between .341 - .611. Examples of items include: "I have friends who are willing to listen to my complaints".

### **Data Analysis**

To fulfill the objectives, a Pearson correlation statistical test was carried out with the IBM SPSS version 20 application

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Help-Seeking Behavior**

This study ascertained 11 parties: partners, friends, parents, family members, psychologists, doctors, police, lecturers, hotlines, celebrities, and others. Based on the potential parties to be referred when seeking assistance, they were divided into three. First, parties with a strong emotional relationship such as parents, family, friends, and partners. Second, professional parties such as lecturers, psychologists, doctors, and the police, and third, others. The results are shown in table 1

in form of an average value based on a minimum value of 1 and a maximum value of 4.

Table 1 shows that there is a general tendency for students to seek assistance from informal parties. This indicates that parents, spouses, friends, and family are the preferred choice when facing this problem. These results are sufficient to illustrate that personal and emotional closeness factors contribute to students seeking help from other parties.

On the other hand, this data poses a challenge regarding optimizing the role of campus professionals, such as lecturers, psychologists, and doctors in providing services to students. This is because campus professionals are obligated to serve appropriately and measurably.

Therefore, although proper handling is needed, providing a sense of security to the victim is the main factor when dealing with students as victims

### **Dating Violence**

The study data in table 2 shows that the most violence experienced by the subject is first psychological, and then physical. Meanwhile, sexual coercion is also considered a form of dating violence that deserves attention. The negotiation in tactic conflict does not include dating violence but is an effort to find solutions. Negotiation has two sides, apart from producing the best solution, it also has the potential to re-fertilize violence.

### **Trust in Campus Authority**

In this study, trust in campus authorities refers to the concept of trust in authority, with four aspects, namely profit, constancy, competence, and integrity. In the context of dating violence, it refers to the extent to which the subject believes that campus authorities can handle cases.

The categorization data in table 3 shows that the subject's trust in campus authorities in solving problems of violence on campus tends to be moderate. Campus authorities have to play a significant role in victims seeking help against dating violence. Furthermore, these

authorities are also at the forefront of protecting students from deviant sexual behavior, enacting good and reliable policies, as well as openly handling cases.

This moderate data below illustrates that the role of the campus, in this case, may be neglected by students. It is possible that the campus already provides facilities but it requires student trust to access these facilities. Therefore, the solution may be to provide the trust with a pattern that is closer to students. These patterns include providing unique peer counseling services. according to the cases experienced.

### Peer Social Support

Peer social support is felt by students and others as an important element to rebuild their self-esteem when experiencing adversity. In terms of being a victim of dating violence, this is highly needed by the victim. This study shows that peer social support is highly expected of the subject. Therefore, the majority of students need peer support when having a romantic relationship, as shown in Table 4.

Table 1  
*Victim's Reference in Asking for Help*

No	Party	Average
1.	Parent	3.0711
2.	Partners	2.9956
3.	Friend	2.9422
4.	Family	2.5289
5.	Doctor	1.4267
6.	Lecturer	1.4089
7.	Psychologist	1.2933
8.	Police	1.2267
9.	Hotline	1.1156
10.	Celebgram	1.0844
11.	Others	1.1511

Table 2  
*Forms of Violence Experienced by Victims*

No	Dating Violence	Average
1.	Psychic Violence	5.2222
2.	Physical abuse	1.8622
3.	Sexual Coercion	.9156
4.	Injury	.5067
5.	Negotiation	23.3956

Table 3  
*Categorization of Trust in Campus Authorities*

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Do not trust campus authorities	10	4.4%
Trust in campus authorities	179	79.6%
Strong trust in campus authorities	36	16.0%

Table 4  
*Categorization of Peer Social Support*

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Feeling unsupported	6	2.7%
Feeling supported	112	49.8%
Really feel supported	107	47.6%

### Correlation of Dating Violence, Trust in Authority, Peer Social Support with Help-Seeking Behavior

The analysis in table 5 shows that trust in authority will enable students to seek help from informal parties, specifically parents, family, partners, and friends. The professional group showed that trust in authority was also positively related to seeking help from doctors, psychologists, and lecturers while seeking help from the police was not determined by trust in authority. Likewise, internet-based assistance such as hotline and celebrity is not determined by trust in authority. Peer social support involves seeking help from friends and parents, while others do not. This shows that mutual emotional bonds between friends greatly influence the decision to whom the victim will seek help. A person who is considered a friend becomes a person who is considered appropriate to assist.

The analysis of the relationship between courtship violence and the direction of seeking help shows a unique direction. Sexual violence or coercion is positively related to the intention to seek help from friends. Furthermore, friends are considered by the victim to be dependable during such circumstances. Among the dimensions of dating violence, forced sexuality constitutes the most severe and long-term effect. Victims experience disturbances in cognition, emotion, psychomotor problems, shame, and

Table 5  
*Intercorrelation on Type of Violence, Party Asked for Help, Trust in Authority and Support of Friends*

No	Variable	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1	Negotiation	.218**	-.067	.111*	.164**	.170**	.065	.040	.023	-.101	-.043	.055	.025	.037	.028	.011
2	Psychic Violence	1	.350**	.172**	.221**	-.024	.052	-.020	-.095	-.152*	-.045	-.030	-.073	-.038	.038	-.131*
3	Physical abuse		1	.236**	.614**	-.156**	.024	.062	.013	.054	.024	.006	-.026	.102	-.031	-.036
4	Sexual Coercion			1	.285**	-.029	.147*	.035	-.005	.001	.039	-.005	-.011	.003	.088	-.133*
5	Injury				1	-.135*	.014	.040	-.081	-.044	-.018	-.043	-.073	-.060	-.082	-.109
6	Partners					1	.243**	.236**	.101	-.091	.035	-.004	-.016	-.054	.107	.111*
7	Friend						1	.284**	.186**	-.018	.073	.139*	.020	.069	.360**	.129*
8	Parent							1	.569**	.148*	.299**	.312**	.200*	.114*	.129*	.196**
9	Family								1	.205**	.315**	.281**	.219*	.121*	.098	.267**
10	psychologist									1	.340**	.380**	.360*	.229**	.067	.165**
11	Doctor										1	.657**	.619*	.317**	.076	.202**
12	Lecturer											1	.552*	.364**	.093	.190**
13	Police												1	.413**	.065	.102
14	Other													1	.108	.116*
15	Friend Support														1	.313**
16	Trust in Authority															1

\*\* significant at  $p < .01$ ; significant at  $p < .05$ \*

depression (Trihastuti & Nuqul, 2020). The need for friends as parties that are expected to provide a sense of security and trust is great, as is family (Amithasari & Khotimah, 2021). In physical violence, victims tend to avoid partners, evidenced by the negative correlation between physical violence in dating, and seeking help.

The results also showed that during negotiations, the victim will direct the girlfriend to play an active role. Negotiation itself is a process of determining the best solution by supporting each other and listening to each other's opinions. Negotiations require communication skills that are mutually understanding and empathetic to prevent dating violence (Courtain & Glowacz, 2019). However, this does not mean that negotiations in courtship are always beneficial. There needs to be caution and critical thinking because other results show that negotiation in dating is positively correlated with physical violence and sexual coercion which has a long-lasting adverse effect (Cho et al., 2021).

The results also show that victims of psychological violence will avoid

psychologists and counselors, and will not even seek help online. This is indicated by a negative relationship between psychological violence and preference for help from psychologists/counselors as well as help from hotlines. The victims also have no preference for seeking help from other parties. This is an anomaly, as a psychologist is a competent party to handle psychological problems. Mapes and Cavell (2021) stated that victims tend to be open about their experiences with trusted parties such as friends and family. Therefore, a psychologist is needed when the victim loses trust in these parties.

In this study, negotiation is the most common tactical effort proposed by the perpetrators. As with cases of domestic violence, negotiations on dating violence have two sides, namely positive and negative. On the positive side, negotiations are seen as a non-violent peace effort, while also being more culturally acceptable. In any conflict, good negotiation skills are needed to achieve a win-win solution. Johnson and Johnson (1991) stated that negotiations must begin with the stages of regulating emotions, understanding the essence of the conflict

together, changing desires, and finding mutually beneficial solutions. This stage is not easy to achieve, but for the common good, this stage must be passed. Otherwise, negotiations in cases of dating violence will turn around to grow or even perpetuate the harassment. The theory of domestic violence which is also the basis for dating violence shows that there is a cycle from conflict to peace that maintains the victim-perpetrator relationship, irrespective of pressure from the perpetrator.

This study also shows that psychological harassment is the first stage of dating violence. Therefore, efforts to break this chain of violence should begin from the first stage. Psychological violence is the most reported violence, which is often overlooked. However, the dangers of psychological violence experienced by victims of dating violence involve deep psychological scars that have long-lasting toxic effects on future romantic relationships. Victims may also resort to drugs, which can interfere with academic performance and optimal life quality (Durant et al., 2007).

This study shows that victims tend to contact parties who have an emotional bond and seek a sense of security compared to competent parties. Furthermore, friends, family, parents, and partners are expected to provide help because they provide a sense of security compared to doctors, psychologists, lecturers, and the police. This also confirms the results of previous studies.

As stated above, there is a tendency to seek support from parties who are considered to provide a sense of security. Victims are concerned that their reports will not be believed, or that the police officers will not be able to help (Ashley & Foshee, 2005; Ocampo et al., 2007). Therefore, the tendency to seek support is related to trust in authority. It is also important for professionals to gain the trust of the victim. A sense of security is also an obstacle for victims to report, which is reflected in the great need for friends. In this study, victims tend to ask for help from

friends, especially in very poor conditions, for example when experiencing sexual violence.

These results are consistent with other studies where victims of dating violence avoid seeking help because of shame, lack of confidentiality, ignorance from adults, stigma, or because many victims do not view abuse or violence as problematic in their relationships (Amar & Alexy, 2005; Vogel & Wei, 2005).

This study generally provides an overview related to the intensity of dating violence in students and the need for handling these cases. However, there are several weaknesses related to the uneven proportion of sampling at certain campuses. This also needs to be observed from the perspective of a perpetrator. The study of dating violence is a sensitive issue, therefore it is necessary to develop qualitative methods.

### Conclusion

Based on this study, there is a relationship between forms of violence, help-seeking behaviour, trust in authority, and social support from peers. Furthermore, the subject has a preference for asking for help from parties considered to have a strong emotional relationship such as friends, parents, family, and even partners, compared to professionals such as doctors, psychologists, and lecturers.

Therefore, it is suggested that campus authorities formulate the following solutions: 1) prevention by actively disseminating information to students; and 2) curation, by institutionalizing appropriate and fair handling efforts, involving student resources to build networks and deal with issues of dating violence. Campuses should also provide ethical regulations and standard operating procedures to handle cases of sexual and dating violence experienced by students.

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