Dynamics of Interpersonal Attraction in Romantic Relationships Among Students: A Case Study of Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya University Students

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Abstract

Background : The objective of this research is to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of interpersonal attraction within romantic relationships among students at Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya University. **Purpose** : The objective of this research is to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of interpersonal attraction within romantic relationships among students at Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya University. **Design／methods／approach**: This research was conducted qualitatively using a phenomenological approach. To obtain comprehensive data, a non-probability quota sampling method and in-depth interviews were employed for data collection. The research subjects consisted of 11 students at Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya University who were involved in romantic relationships. The grouping and labeling of data clusters constituted an integral part of the phenomenological method used for data analysis. **Findings** : Of the 11 research subjects, 6 of them met frequently and rarely experienced conflict, 4 of them met infrequently and rarely experienced conflict, and 1 of them met infrequently but still experienced conflict. The study found that meeting frequency and conflict play an important role in the dynamics of interpersonal attraction. In addition, commitment, expectations, frequency, and purpose of meetings are also important factors in maintaining romantic relationships among university students.

Keywords : Interpersonal interests, Romance, Student, Communication, Conflict

Introduction

In the realm of psychology, the establishment of social connections is referred to as interpersonal relationships (Sarwono & Meinarno 2015; Taylor, Peplau, & Sears, 2009). Humans are inherently social beings, meaning they cannot survive in isolation. Instinctively, individuals seekout and form bonds with others in their environment, creating a sense of comfort and security. Within interpersonal relationships, individuals strive to recognize and comprehend each other's personalities and needs, establishing patterns of interaction and working to sustain these

connections over time.

The attraction experienced within interpersonal relationships serves as the foundation for the subsequent process of selecting a romantic partner (Yun, 1996; Humbad, 2012). Partner selection typically commences with a search phase before progressing to courtship and potentially marriage (Rusovick, 2009). For most individuals, choosing a partner is a lengthy process involving careful consideration. It entails evaluating whether the individual is genuinely appealing and if the relationship has the potential to develop into a more intimate connection. While these considerations vary among individuals, the role of attraction in interpersonal relationships remains a crucial factor (Akbar Wicaksono, 2018).

Interpersonal relationships involve two or more individuals exchanging information, emotions, and behaviors within various contexts, such as family, friendships, colleagues, and romantic partnerships. Factors influencing the initiation of these relationships encompass internal, external, and interactive elements. Internal factors include the need to belong and the influence of feelings, while external factors comprise proximity and physical attractiveness. Interactive factors, on the other hand, involve similarity-dissimilarity and reciprocal liking.

Putu Dinanty, a civil servant (as cited in Santika & Permana, 2021), suggests that engaging in romantic relationships or dating is a fundamental aspect of human experience that necessitates self- adjustment and effort. Based on an analysis of everyday cultural practices, the Indonesian term "pacaran" is most accurately equated with the English term "romantic relationship."

Romantic relationships can serve as a means for self-exploration and identity development. Individuals learn about their personal preferences, values, and expectations through interactions with their partners, aiding them in the process of self-discovery. Furthermore, changes in social dynamics occur among students involved in romantic relationships. They may prioritize spending time with their partners over peers, leading to shifts in their social circles.

The concept of intrapersonal dynamics gap among college students addresses physical attraction as a component of interpersonal attraction influenced by liking. This liking stems from physical appearance, behavior, competence, or sincerity, potentially sparking a connection between two individuals (Aufar et al., 2023). Interpersonal attraction positively impacts students' academic performance, as they tend to learn more efficiently when collaborating with those they care about. When interpersonal attraction develops between students and teachers, opportunities for positive communication within the classroom increase, fostering an effective learning environment.

Interpersonal attraction carries positive connotations, with individuals generally favoring those who share similar values. However, it can also manifest negatively, leading to biased

judgments about others. Social comparison further influences interpersonal interactions, yielding either positive or negative outcomes. The results depend on various factors, including individual characteristics, situational context, and the direction of social comparison.

Couples who lack openness about their shared experiences tend to foster suspicion, distrust, and emotional distance, leading to ineffective communication and frequent misunderstandings (Pratama, 2016). According to Lewicki (2000), factors influencing trust include communication, promises, actions, coordination, personality traits, and cohesive experiences.

Rempel et al. (1985) propose that trust in relationships comprises three dimensions: predictability (consistent behavior), dependability (being reliable), and faith (having confidence in the other person).

Understanding the characteristics of each generation born in a specific year is crucial. Stillman & Stillman (2017) trace the evolution of generational labels, starting with the Baby Boomers or Silent Generation (1946-1964), followed by Generation X (1965-1979), Millennials (1980-1994), and Generation Z (1995-2012). Notably, there are differences in how Generation Y and Generation Z relate to others. Generation Y primarily connects virtually through the internet or indirectly, while Generation Z engages both virtually and in person, though their relationships tend to lack depth due to the dominance of technology.

This research explores the impact of interpersonal relationship quality on individual mental health. High-quality interpersonal relationships are identified as a key factor in understanding and promoting psychological well-being. In this context, relationship quality encompasses aspects such as social support, emotional engagement, and communication quality. Empirical research and literature reviews support the hypothesis that positive interpersonal relationships correlate positively with good mental health. Strong social support from friends, family, and community can act as a protective buffer against stress, depression, and anxiety. Moreover, positive and supportive interactions can enhance individuals' resilience in coping with daily life challenges.

Literature Review

Physical proximity can either decrease or increase the likelihood of individuals encountering and interacting with each other, serving as a basis for attraction. While attraction is generally grounded in social theories, experts from other schools of thought offer alternative perspectives, such as developmental and cognitive viewpoints, when considering interpersonal attraction.

For individuals to become acquainted, initial reactions to physical appearance often stem from emotional responses, and similarities between individuals play a significant role. This illustrates how two people might get to know each other through chance encounters at school,

work, or in their neighborhood (Mahmudah, 2021). In psychology, this attraction to others is termed interpersonal attraction.

Human interpersonal relationships are founded on feelings of liking between two people, with attraction potentially serving as a catalyst for these relationships. Byrne & Griffitt define interpersonal attraction as an individual's attitude towards another person, often leading to friendships and romantic connections. The motivation for interaction is fueled by mutual interest between the individuals involved. Consequently, interpersonal attraction holds significant importance within relationships (Mahmudah, 2021).

Conflicts, such as disagreements, jealousy, or misunderstandings, are a common occurrence in romantic relationships. However, these conflicts can also serve as valuable opportunities for couples to develop healthy conflict resolution and communication skills. These skills are crucial for understanding the dynamics of interpersonal attraction among college students.

There are several theories in developmental psychology and social psychology that are relevant, namely there are 7 theories, the first of which is Attachment Theory This theory was proposed by John Bowlby and proposes that the attachment relationship between an infant and a caregiver figure (usually the mother) forms the basis for the formation of future interpersonal relationships. At a young age, early attachment patterns can influence how individuals build and maintain romantic relationships. Social Cognitive Theory This theory, developed by Albert Bandura, emphasizes the importance of observation and social learning in the development of human behavior. At a young age, individuals learn about the dynamics of interpersonal relationships through observing models in their environment, such as parents, peers, or the media. Identity Formation Theory This theory, introduced by Erik Erikson, highlights the role of identity exploration in individual development. At a young age, the process of identity exploration can influence how one seeks and builds romantic relationships that fit their self-image. Social Exchange Theory This theory focuses on the social exchange that occurs in interpersonal relationships. At a young age, individuals tend to consider costs and benefits in romantic relationships, including emotional satisfaction, support, and compatibility. Bonding Theory This theory highlights the importance of forming emotional bonds in interpersonal relationships. In late adolescence, individuals may seek relationships that can fulfill emotional needs and provide the support necessary for personal growth and development. Self-Expansion Theory This theory, proposed by Arthur Aron, states that individuals seek relationships that allow them to expand and improve themselves. In late adolescence, interpersonal attraction may be driven by a desire to experience personal growth and new explorations. Evolutionary Theory This theory emphasizes the role of evolution in shaping human behavior and preferences,

including in the context of romantic relationships. Individuals may seek partners who are perceived to have good genetic qualities or health signals to ensure the survival of their relationship's future offspring.

According to Lahey, the dimensions of interpersonal attraction encompass affection or social connection (social or empathy dimension), duty and respect (task and respect dimension), and physical or appearance (in Sari & Siswati, 2017).

The factors influencing interpersonal attraction can be divided into two categories: personal factors and situational factors. Personal factors stem from an individual's personal characteristics, while situational factors arise from objective characteristics. This factor encompasses several sub-dimensions, including proximity, familiarity, and similarity. One aspect that also appears to be beneficial is beauty, leading to interdependence between the two. In this interdependence, individuals will continue to maintain relationships to complement each other's strengths and weaknesses. If the existing relationship is perceived as beneficial, it is highly likely to continue indefinitely.

Intimate relationships can develop through friendship, sexuality, and love. Typically, young adults express their love within romantic relationships. Defrain and Skogrand define a romantic relationship as an emotional bond between two individuals characterized by commitment and trust (in Azmi Rozali, 2022). Romantic relationships emerge through connections that enable us to form bonds with others, commonly referred to as intimacy (Sternberg, 1988 in Azmi Rozali, 2022).

Intimacy in early adulthood differs from adolescence, as it tends to be more serious and oriented towards a commitment to marriage. If young adults are unable to effectively maximize their closeness, they risk isolation. The inability to collaborate with others through varying levels of intimacy defines isolation. If someone is isolated, they will experience difficulties in forming relationships, both friendships and romantic connections with the opposite sex.

Engagement in romantic relationships occurs after the establishment of strong interpersonal relationships. Altman and Taylor introduced social penetration theory as a concept that aids in understanding interpersonal relationships. This theory encompasses the process of transforming casual relationships into closer ones. The process begins with orientation, which involves the exchange of general information. If both parties perceive benefits, they then proceed to the exploratory affective exchange stage. At this stage, each party seeks information more thoroughly. When the desire to criticize and evaluate arises, it signifies their entry into the third stage, affective exchange. The most crucial aspect of developing interpersonal relationships is balanced exchange, where closeness allows for mutual anticipation of actions and positive

responses (West and Turner, 2010 in Lestari, 2019). In the final process, romantic relationships form at the point of affective involvement.

According to Sprecher and Metts (1989), there are four dimensions in romantic beliefs, namely love at first sight, idealization, love will overcome obstacles (love finds a way), and the one and only. Love at first sight is the belief that individuals can experience falling in love with another person they meet for the first time. Ideal is the belief that true love will be perfect; in the sense that the beloved partner will match expectations and the romantic relationship will be perfect. Love will overcome obstacles is the belief that true love can face all challenges or problems that could potentially damage the relationship. The only one is the belief that there is only one true love for each individual (in Angela & Hadiwirawan, 2022).

Lippman et al. (2014) proposed that one of the factors influencing individuals' satisfaction in romantic relationships is their beliefs, which consist of their expectations and hopes for the romantic relationship itself. The romantic beliefs held by individuals are associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction in a research sample of married or partnered individuals. Sprecher (1999) found that romantic beliefs are positively correlated with increased feelings of love, satisfaction, and individuals' willingness to commit to their romantic relationships (in Angela & Hadiwirawan, 2022).

Methods

This research employs a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach, chosen to understand the subjective world of experience and explain the meaning of those experiences in relation to the phenomenon under investigation (Rahmandanani, 2007). The phenomenon being explored is the dynamics of attraction in romantic relationships.

The data collection techniques in this research involved two methods. Firstly, quota non-probability sampling was used to select the sample. Information from previous researchers regarding students at Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya University who were in romantic relationships led to the selection of 11 students as research subjects. Secondly, in-depth interviews were conducted to gather data. These in-depth interviews allowed the interviewer to ask respondents in-depth questions, thereby obtaining comprehensive information about the phenomenon under study. These interviews were specifically targeted towards students who were couples currently in romantic relationships, focusing on how they maintain those relationships. A summary of the informant data in table form follows below.

Table 1

Data of Research Participants

No.	Inisial Nama	Usia	Durasi Berkencan	Konflik dalam Berkencan	Frekuensi Pertemuan
1.	F	18 Tahun	1 Tahun 9 Bulan	Sering	Jarang
2.	G	18 Tahun	1 Tahun	Sering	Sering
3.	T	20 Tahun	1 Tahun	Jarang	Jarang
4.	W	20 Tahun	2 Tahun	Jarang	Sering
5.	R	19 Tahun	6 Tahun	Jarang	Sering
6.	H	19 Tahun	4 Bulan	Jarang	Jarang
7.	N	19 Tahun	3 Bulan	Jarang	Sering
8.	S	18 Tahun	1 Tahun	Jarang	Jarang
9.	T	19 Tahun	2,5 Tahun	Jarang	Sering
10.	N	18 Tahun	2 Tahun	Jarang	Sering
11	S	20 Tahun	6 Bulan	Jarang	Jarang

Source: processed primary data

Moustakas suggests that the data analysis used in this research is phenomenological data analysis (Creswell, 2015: 113 in Zahra & Rakhmad, 2022), such as making an initial list and grouping the data taken, grouping and theming each group of data by describing the central theme of the research and identifying the final data obtained through the initial data validation process by reviewing data and themes.

Result and Discussion

Conflict Management and Relationship Communication in Dating

The informants in this study on romantic relationships were university students aged between 18 and 22 years old. Some of these relationships were long-term, while others were still in the early stages, having lasted only a few months. The process of a romantic relationship begins with a mutual agreement between two individuals to pursue a connection that is closer than friendship, initiated by a period of getting to know each other, commonly referred to as PDKT. Several informants highlighted that the key to maintaining a relationship over a long period is communication and openness, as expressed by one informant:

"In my opinion, communication is crucial. A relationship won't run smoothly without it." - Interview with informant R.

From the results of this study, the researcher found an average influence of the important role of meeting frequency on the frequency of conflicts in dating. Specifically, 6 individuals who met frequently rarely experienced arguments. In establishing a relationship, communication plays a crucial role. Communicative intensity refers to the depth of understanding and breadth of messages or meanings that emerge in communication between at least two or more people.

Reduced communication and contact with a partner is a sign of a strained relationship. It is

especially important to stay connected in long-distance relationships using technology, such as video calls or text messages. This is supported by the research findings, where 4 individuals experienced infrequent conflicts despite rarely meeting in person.

The research also identified one individual who fell into the category of infrequent meetings and frequent conflicts within their relationship. Arguments and breakdowns in communication between partners, both face-to-face and through social media conversations, represent a form of dissociative symbolic interaction. The symbolism of the end of a relationship is also expressed in different ways. Some couples choose to resolve their conflicts with two decisions: either ending the relationship or maintaining (repairing) the bond they have built. The informants explained that these conflicts can be resolved through careful consideration, open communication, and seeking mutual understanding to overcome the issues.

There is a close relationship between the quality of communication and commitment between partners. The better the quality of communication, the greater the commitment to the partner, and vice versa. Good communication fosters trust, openness, and understanding between partners, keeping the relationship alive. When communication is poor, the relationship is marked by distrust and misunderstandings (Santri et al., 2022).

Just like privacy in a romantic relationship, such as dating, is about respecting each other's personal space and maintaining open and honest communication. The informant stated that:

"In my opinion, exchanging social media accounts is unnecessary and unimportant, but if you want to, go ahead. If we trust each other, what's the point?" - Interview with informant H.

Relationship Expectations

Hope is a mental process where individuals possess the willpower and means to achieve their desired goals (Snyder, 2000). Dating relationships are a process between two individuals seeking compatibility to enter a more serious relationship, namely marriage and family. Romantic relationships are pursued with happiness, where partners share, love, and balance each other's shortcomings. If desired, individuals can commit to discussing and agreeing on goals with their partners and considering the best way to achieve those goals (Snyder, Cheavens, Feldman, Gum, Michael, & Snyder, 2006; Snyder, 2000).

However, on the other hand, many students initiate relationships at a young age simply to fill their free time and enjoy their youth. The types of relationships vary depending on the period and purpose. The duration of relationships can range from days, weeks, months, to even years. Long-term dating relationships can often serve as a preparatory step towards a more serious commitment, leading to engagement or marriage. Therefore, romantic relationships are not

necessarily synonymous with marriage, sometimes serving as a connection for individuals who simply love each other and want to be in a relationship without overly focusing on future plans.

It is essential to understand the characteristics of generations like Generation Y and Generation Z from an interpersonal relationship perspective. The quality of interpersonal relationships also impacts an individual's mental health, with social support acting as a protective factor against stress, depression, and anxiety.

Issues related to romantic relationship satisfaction concern how individuals cope with problems that arise within those relationships (Ursila, 2012). The problems that emerge can have either positive effects (strengthening the relationship) or negative effects (destroying the relationship), depending on how individuals perceive those problems.

A study by Zagefka and Bahul (2020) found that conflict within a relationship is a predictor of relationship satisfaction. People who avoid conflict with their partners tend to be more satisfied with their relationships. These results indicate that the more someone believes in an idealized relationship, the more likely they are to give a positive assessment of their current romantic relationship.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this research is that the frequency of meetings and conflicts within a relationship play a key role in the dynamics of interpersonal attraction. Factors such as communication, frequency of meetings, commitment, expectations, and goals are also crucial in maintaining romantic relationships among university students. Moreover, this research provides valuable insights into the complexities of interpersonal and romantic relationships across various stages of life.

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