
The Relationship Between Verbal Abuse and Anxiety in Young Adult Women in Dating Relationships

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Abstract. Verbal abuse in dating relationships is often overlooked and considered a normal conflict, even though it can have a significant impact on mental health, especially in young adult women who are in a vulnerable stage of development. This study aims to analyze the relationship between verbal abuse and anxiety levels in young adult women in dating relationships. The study used a correlational quantitative design with 155 participants aged 18–25 years in Surabaya who had experienced verbal abuse from their partners. The instruments used were the Conflict Tactics Scale 2 (CTS2) to measure verbal abuse and the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) to measure anxiety. The data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation test with the help of JASP software. The results showed a significant positive relationship between verbal abuse and anxiety levels ($r = 0.855$, $p < .001$), which means that the higher the experience of verbal abuse, the higher the level of anxiety experienced. These findings reinforce emotion regulation theory and attachment theory, which state that negative interpersonal experiences can disrupt emotion regulation and reinforce anxious attachment patterns, leading to increased anxiety symptoms. In conclusion, verbal abuse in dating relationships has serious implications for mental health, requiring preventive interventions and counseling that emphasize strengthening emotion regulation and healthy relationship literacy.

Keywords: verbal abuse; anxiety; attachment; relationship; emotional regulation

INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is one of the most common psychological disorders in early adulthood and has a significant impact on quality of life, academic achievement, and social relationships (Maaz & Hayee, 2025). The World Health Organization (2022) emphasizes that people aged 18–29 are vulnerable to anxiety because they are in a phase of developmental transition, identity formation, and exploration of intimate relationships. Cross-country studies show that the prevalence of anxiety is higher in late adolescence and early adulthood than in other age groups (Matud et al., 2023). Early adulthood (18–29 years) is often considered a critical phase of development because it is marked by significant transitions, such as identity formation, career direction, and the formation of lasting romantic relationships. However, this phase is also accompanied by vulnerability to mental disorders, especially depression, anxiety, and stress (Westberg et al., 2025).

One of the most common interpersonal factors that trigger anxiety in young adults is verbal abuse in dating relationships. Verbal abuse is a form of violence that is often overlooked. The phenomenon of dating violence shows that psychological violence in the form of ridicule, insults, shouting, and verbal threats has the highest prevalence compared to physical and sexual violence, especially among college students and young couples (Klencakova et al., 2021; Rodríguez-deArriba et al., 2024). Research in Indonesia also shows that violence in dating relationships is more often in the form of verbal abuse than other forms, but it is often normalized as part of relationship dynamics (Hutami et al., 2021). This risk is more serious in early adulthood (18–29 years), as this period is crucial for the formation of self-identity and patterns of ongoing intimate relationships (Lortkipanidze et al., 2025).

This phenomenon is relevant in Indonesia. Data from the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan, 2022) shows an increase in cases of violence

against women, including dating violence. However, most cases of verbal abuse are not recorded because they are considered personal matters or ordinary conflicts. The Surabaya PPA UPTD report recorded 236 cases of violence against women throughout 2023 (Adelia & Oktariyanda, 2024), but this figure is believed to be much smaller than the actual number of cases. Based on the 2024 violence data report from the Surabaya City UPTD PPA, there were 27 cases involving unmarried young adult women (UPTD PPA Surabaya, 2024). From January to September 2025, the Surabaya City UPTD PPA reported 19 cases involving unmarried young adult women (UPTD PPA Surabaya, 2025). All of these cases involved verbal abuse. However, these are only a fraction of the reported cases, as there are other cases of verbal abuse in dating relationships that are not reported to the Surabaya City UPTD PPA. The causes are social stigma, shame, and a lack of support, which lead many victims to remain silent, so that the psychological impact goes undetected and is not adequately addressed (Khaleel et al., 2024). In other words, verbal abuse is still considered a trivial matter, even though it has serious consequences for the mental health of the victim (Dube et al., 2023; Thornton et al., 2024).

Theoretically, the relationship between verbal abuse and anxiety can be understood through several psychological approaches (Ryan et al., 2023). First, based on emotion regulation theory, anxiety in relationships can arise when a person experiences difficulty regulating negative emotions such as fear of rejection or loss, which then triggers repetitive maladaptive thinking (repetitive negative thinking) that reinforces interpersonal anxiety (Raposo et al., 2025; Frommelt et al., 2025). Thus, verbal abuse is understood not only as a painful interpersonal experience, but also as a chronic stressor that disrupts psychological balance. Second, attachment theory explains that early attachment patterns with caregivers form internal working models about oneself and others, which then influence emotion regulation, interpersonal relationships, and vulnerability to stress or psychological disorders in adulthood (Ierardi et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2022). These two theories complement each other in explaining how verbal abuse in dating relationships affects the psychological condition of victims (Dokkedahl et al., 2022).

However, most studies on intimate partner violence still focus on physical or sexual violence. Verbal abuse is often included in the broad category of “emotional abuse,” so its specific mechanisms and unique effects are rarely studied in depth (Radell, 2021; Lortkipanidze et al., 2025). In Indonesia, research on the relationship between verbal abuse and anxiety among young adult women in dating relationships is still limited, and is generally cross-sectional in nature with diverse instruments (Barroso - Corroto et al., 2023; López-Barranco et al., 2022). As a result, our understanding of the direct relationship between verbal abuse and anxiety is still lacking in structure. The importance of this study lies in its effort to highlight verbal abuse as a serious form of violence that impacts anxiety, rather than simply a common couple conflict (Dube et al., 2023).

This study aims to fill this gap. The focus is to examine the relationship between experiences of verbal abuse and anxiety levels among young adult women in romantic relationships. The novelty of this study lies in several aspects. There are two hypotheses in this study. H1, that there is a relationship between experiences of verbal abuse and anxiety levels among young adult women in romantic relationships. H0, that there is no relationship between experiences of verbal abuse and anxiety levels among young adult women in romantic relationships.

First, the study highlights verbal abuse specifically, rather than emotional abuse in general, so that it can reveal the specific impact of this form of abuse. Second, the participants are focused on young adult women who are not yet married or in a relationship, a group that is in a vulnerable phase and determining patterns of long-term intimate relationships. Third, the study uses international standard instruments, namely CTS2 (Conflict Tactics Scale 2) to measure verbal abuse using relevant CTS2 items and BAI (Beck Anxiety Inventory) for anxiety

symptoms, with local context adjustments. In addition, another difference from previous studies is that they generally highlight physical, sexual, or violence by married partners. This approach is relatively rare in Indonesia, thus providing both methodological and practical contributions. The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between experiences of verbal abuse from partners and anxiety levels in young adult women in dating relationships.

By emphasizing the phenomenon of verbal abuse in dating, its impact on anxiety levels, and elaborating on the theories of emotion regulation and attachment, this study is expected to broaden academic understanding and support practical interventions. Specifically, the results of this study are expected to form the basis for counseling interventions, healthy relationship literacy education, and social policies that encourage victims to speak up and seek appropriate help.

METHOD

This study used a correlational quantitative design to examine the relationship between experiences of verbal abuse from partners and anxiety in young adult women. The target population was women aged 18–25 years in Surabaya who experienced verbal abuse from their partners during courtship. The number of participants was set at 155. The sample size was obtained based on GPower using the effect size estimated from previous relevant studies (Pratita & Herdiana, 2022), with an effect size of 0.199, an α err prob value of 0.05, and a Power ($1 - \beta$ err prob) value of 0.80, resulting in a minimum sample size of 152 people. Based on the results of GPower, the researchers set the sample size at 155 people. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which is the selection of samples based on specific criteria so that the participants truly represent the phenomenon being studied (Campbell et al., 2020). The participant criteria included (1) young adult women aged 18–25 years, (2) having experienced verbal abuse from a partner for a minimum of three months and a maximum of several years in a dating relationship, (3) residing in the Surabaya area, and (4) willing to give consent to participate.

The Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2) was used to measure various forms of tactics in couple conflict, including negotiation, psychological aggression, physical violence, sexual coercion, and injury. This study focused on the dimension of psychological aggression or verbal abuse. Of the total 78 items, this study used 20 items relevant to verbal abuse. Sample items include “My partner insults or curses me,” “My partner yells or shouts at me,” and “My partner accuses me of being a bad partner.” A number of items were editorially modified to make them easier for participants to understand without changing their original meaning. This instrument generally shows adequate reliability (Alpha Ordinal = 0.88) (Vásquez Mamani et al., 2024). Evidence of local adaptation in Indonesia supports excellent internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.930$) and appropriate construct validity (Pratita & Herdiana, 2022), making the CTS2 suitable for measuring experiences of verbal abuse in the Indonesian cultural context.

The instrument used to measure anxiety levels was the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI). The BAI is a 21-item self-report questionnaire with a scale of 0–3 (0 = not at all, 3 = very disturbing) that measures anxiety symptoms in the past week. The total score ranges from 0–63, with the following interpretation: 0–7 (minimal), 8–15 (mild), 16–25 (moderate), ≥ 26 (severe). The BAI has high internal reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.90$ – 0.95) and strong construct validity across various populations (Mazhak et al., 2025). The Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) as an instrument to measure anxiety levels in early adulthood in Indonesia has been proven to have high reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha > 0.90) and good validity in distinguishing participants’ anxiety levels, making it suitable for measuring anxiety levels in Indonesia (Meiliandra et al., 2024).

The questionnaire includes demographic data (age and relationship duration). After that, to ensure that the criteria are met, participants are given screening questions, such as: “Are you

currently in a romantic relationship?”, “How long has your relationship been going on?”, “How many times have you been in a relationship?”, “Have you ever experienced your partner yelling, insulting, mocking, or threatening you repeatedly in a dating relationship?” and “If yes, has this experience been going on for 3 months?” Participants who answered “Yes” were able to continue filling out the questionnaire. Data was collected through an online survey using a structured questionnaire in the form of a Google form for approximately 3 weeks.

Recruitment was conducted through social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Telegram. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, data confidentiality, and informed consent. The collected data were checked for completeness, missing values, and outliers, and participants with incomplete data were excluded from the analysis. Statistical analysis was performed using JASP 0.18.1.0.

The stages of data analysis included (1) testing the validity and reliability of the instruments in this research, which will be reported using Pearson's Validity Test and Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test for each dimension; (2) descriptive analysis of the distribution of age and relationship duration, as well as the average BAI and CTS2 scores; (3) testing the normality of the data using Shapiro-Wilk; (4) correlation analysis using the Pearson test. If the normality assumption was not met, the analysis continued with Spearman's non-parametric correlation (Schober & Schwarte, 2018). The results of the analysis are reported with r values, p -values, and 95% confidence intervals accompanied by effect size interpretations. All research procedures comply with the ethics of the university's ethics committee and are carried out while upholding the principles of research ethics, including participant anonymity and the provision of psychological support information for participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data collection was conducted over a two-week period after the questionnaire was distributed via social media. In selecting the data, the researchers screened the participants' responses according to the research criteria and eliminated those that did not meet the criteria, resulting in a total of 155 participants. The following are the results of the data analysis that has been conducted.

Table 1. Validity Verbal Abuse (CTS2)

Verbal Abuse (CTS2)	Pearson's r	p –value
X1	0.783	<.001
X2	0.796	<.001
X3	0.773	<.001
X4	0.808	<.001
X5	0.804	<.001
X6	0.790	<.001
X7	0.767	<.001
X8	0.749	<.001
X9	0.774	<.001
X10	0.748	<.001
X11	0.775	<.001
X12	0.784	<.001
X13	0.786	<.001
X14	0.827	<.001
X15	0.777	<.001
X16	0.843	<.001
X17	0.739	<.001
X18	0.766	<.001
X19	0.787	<.001
X20	0.790	<.001

Table 1 shows that each item of CTS2 in measuring verbal abuse has a ρ –value of $<.001$, which is <0.05 . This indicates that the CTS2 items in measuring verbal abuse are valid.

Table 2. Validity Anxiety (BAI)

Anxiety (BAI)	Pearson's r	ρ –value
Y1	0.755	$<.001$
Y2	0.714	$<.001$
Y3	0.689	$<.001$
Y4	0.711	$<.001$
Y5	0.658	$<.001$
Y6	0.747	$<.001$
Y7	0.688	$<.001$
Y8	0.719	$<.001$
Y9	0.672	$<.001$
Y10	0.660	$<.001$
Y11	0.684	$<.001$
Y12	0.736	$<.001$
Y13	0.700	$<.001$
Y14	0.762	$<.001$
Y15	0.713	$<.001$
Y16	0.690	$<.001$
Y17	0.721	$<.001$
Y18	0.676	$<.001$
Y19	0.607	$<.001$
Y20	0.723	$<.001$
Y21	0.607	$<.001$

(See Table 1) as has a ρ –value of $<.001$, which is <0.05 outlined in Tables 2. That each item of BAI in measuring anxiety are valid.

Based on Table 1 and Table 2, this shows that each item in CTS2 and BAI is able to measure verbal abuse and anxiety accurately and consistently. All statement items in each dimension of the instrument are valid and suitable for use in further research data collection. Good validity across all items also indicates that the instrument has a high representative ability in capturing the variables under study, so that the measurement results are reliable and reflect the actual conditions in the field.

Table 3. Reliability Verbal Abuse and Anxiety

Estimate	Cronbach's α
Point estimate	0.972

Table 3 shows that CTS2 and BAI have a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.972, which is greater than 0.70, meaning that the reliability testing assumption has been met. This reliability test shows that the instruments used to measure variables are consistent and accurate.

(See Tables 1 and 2) as the data is valid and consistent with Table 3, which states that the data has passed the reliability test. It can be seen that the data has passed the validity and reliability tests. These values indicate that the research instrument has a very good level of internal consistency, so it can be relied upon to measure research variables in a stable and consistent manner. All items in this instrument have met the validity and reliability criteria, making it suitable for use as a measuring tool in the research data collection process. The success of the instrument in meeting these two criteria strengthens the quality of the data produced and ensures that the research findings have a strong empirical basis and are scientifically accountable.

Table 4. Descriptive Analysis Verbal Abuse and Anxiety in Age

Age	Variabel	Valid (N)	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
18	Verbal Abuse	23	59,609	60,000	23,442	20,000	92,000
	Anxiety	23	37,304	36,500	10,164	17,000	56,000
19	Verbal Abuse	18	51,667	55,500	31,943	6,000	99,000
	Anxiety	18	34,111	36,500	14,720	8,000	55,000
20	Verbal Abuse	21	49,048	54,000	26,120	9,000	104,000
	Anxiety	21	35,000	36,000	9,793	20,000	59,000
21	Verbal Abuse	15	58,000	58,000	27,071	22,000	118,000
	Anxiety	15	37,867	36,000	13,721	19,000	59,000
22	Verbal Abuse	23	55,652	53,000	17,709	30,000	111,000
	Anxiety	23	36,435	39,000	8,570	23,000	54,000
23	Verbal Abuse	11	55,455	60,000	23,838	11,000	86,000
	Anxiety	11	38,727	41,000	14,588	13,000	57,000
24	Verbal Abuse	22	55,818	57,000	24,317	2,000	94,000
	Anxiety	22	36,500	36,500	11,608	9,000	57,000
25	Verbal Abuse	22	51,409	46,000	26,220	10,000	101,000
	Anxiety	22	35,091	34,000	10,038	20,000	57,000

Table 4 shows that based on age, the number of valid data (N) for the variables of verbal abuse and anxiety in each age group varies between 11 and 23 respondents. In general, verbal abuse scores had a mean between 49.0 and 59.6, a median between 46.0 and 60.0, with a fairly varied standard deviation (SD) of 17.7 to 31.9, indicating differences in data distribution between age groups. The minimum value ranged from 2.0 to 30.0, while the highest maximum value was found in the 22-year-old age group, which was 111.0. Meanwhile, anxiety scores had a mean between 34.1 and 38.7, a median ranging from 33.0 to 41.0, a standard deviation between 8.6 and 14.7, with the lowest minimum value of 8.0 and the highest maximum of 64.0 at the age of 18.

From this pattern, it can be seen that the 18-year-old age group showed relatively high verbal abuse and anxiety scores in early young adulthood. The 22-year-old age group stood out in terms of maximum verbal abuse scores, indicating that there were individuals with high-intensity verbal abuse experiences at this age. In general, the 19 to 23 age group shows a relatively stable average, although the distribution of values remains quite wide, indicating a variety of experiences and levels of anxiety among young adult respondents.

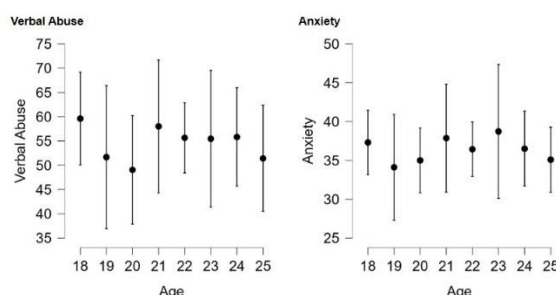


Figure 1. Interval Plots Verbal Abuse and Anxiety in Age

Figure 1 shows the level of verbal abuse experienced by participants from their partners varies between age groups. The 18-year-old age group had a fairly high average verbal abuse score, which then decreased at age 19. After that, there was an increase again at age 20, reaching its highest point at age 21 with an average score of nearly 60, accompanied by a fairly large range of variability. After age 21, verbal abuse scores tended to decline gradually and stabilize in the 22 to 25 age group, although they remained in the moderate to high category. This pattern indicates that participants in early young adulthood (18–21 years old) tend to be more vulnerable to verbal abuse from their partners than older age groups.

Meanwhile, anxiety levels show a relatively stable pattern across age groups. The average anxiety score ranged from 34 to 40, with a slight decrease at age 19, then an increase again at ages 21 to 23 before decreasing again at ages 24 and 25. The wider confidence interval at age 21 indicates considerable individual variation in anxiety experiences in this age group.

In general, these findings show that experiences of verbal abuse from partners tend to be higher at a young age (18–21 years old), while anxiety levels do not show a sharp increase or decrease between age groups but fluctuate relatively with a stable trend.

Table 5. Descriptive Analysis Verbal Abuse and Anxiety in Relationship Duration

Relationship Duration	Variabel	Valid (N)	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
1 year	Verbal Abuse	9	46,667	40,000	26,096	10,000	78,000
	Anxiety	9	34,222	35,000	11,487	19,000	57,000
1-2 year	Verbal Abuse	46	50,217	51,500	24,648	9,000	104,000
	Anxiety	46	35,261	38,500	11,824	10,000	56,000
3-6 month	Verbal Abuse	33	55,152	56,000	27,227	2,000	111,000
	Anxiety	33	34,697	36,000	11,962	8,000	56,000
6-12 month	Verbal Abuse	31	53,290	52,000	21,747	10,000	92,000
	Anxiety	31	35,452	33,000	10,046	16,000	56,000
>2 year	Verbal Abuse	36	62,444	66,000	24,021	15,000	118,000
	Anxiety	36	40,000	39,000	10,472	18,000	59,000

Table 5 shows variations based on relationship duration. For a relationship duration of 1 year, verbal abuse had a mean of 46.6 (SD = 26.1) with a range of 10.0–78.0, while anxiety had a mean of 34.2 (SD = 11.5) with a range of 19.0–57.0. For a duration of 1–2 years, the mean verbal abuse increased to 50.2 with a median of 51.5 and a maximum of 104.0, while anxiety was also at a mean of 35.3. The 3–6 month duration showed a very high maximum verbal abuse score of 111.0, with a mean of 55.2 and SD of 27.2, while anxiety had a mean of 34.7. The 6–12 month duration showed relatively consistent verbal abuse scores (mean 53.3, SD 21.7). Interestingly, the group with a relationship duration of more than 2 years recorded a mean verbal abuse score of 62.4 (SD = 24.0) with a maximum of 118.0, and a mean anxiety score of 40.0 (SD = 10.5) with a maximum of 59.0.

In general, these findings indicate that the longer the relationship duration, the higher the mean scores for verbal abuse and anxiety tend to be, although high intensity can also occur in

short-term relationships such as 3–6 months. In addition, the large spread of data across several age and duration groups indicates diversity in interpersonal experiences and individual anxiety levels in romantic relationships. These descriptive findings provide an important basis for further analysis of the relationship between verbal abuse and anxiety in the context of dating relationships.

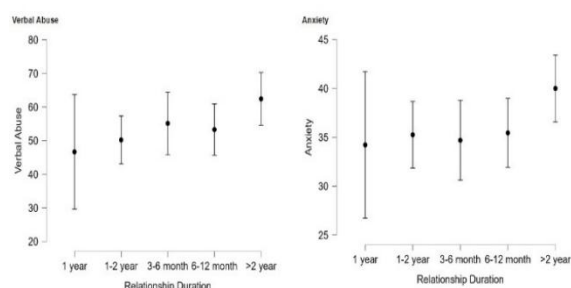


Figure 2. Interval Plots Verbal Abuse and Anxiety in Relationship Duration

Figure 2 shows that the level of verbal abuse experienced by participants from their partners varied based on the duration of the relationship. Participants with relationships lasting one year showed lower average verbal abuse scores than other groups, although with a fairly wide confidence range. After one year, there was an increase in verbal abuse scores in the groups with relationship durations of 1–2 years, 3–6 months, and 6–12 months, which were in the medium to high score range (around 50–60). The group with a relationship duration of more than two years showed the highest verbal abuse scores, approaching an average of 65, with a relatively narrower confidence interval.

This pattern shows that the longer the duration of the relationship, the higher the level of verbal abuse experienced by participants, especially after two years of relationship. Meanwhile, anxiety levels also showed an increasing trend along with the duration of the relationship. Participants with one-year relationships had lower anxiety scores than other duration groups, although with considerable individual variation.

The groups with durations of 1–2 years, 3–6 months, and 6–12 months showed relatively stable anxiety scores in the range of 35–36. However, in the group with a relationship duration of more than two years, anxiety scores increased markedly to around 40, with a relatively narrow confidence interval.

Overall, these findings suggest that the duration of the dating relationship is associated with an increase in participants' experience of verbal abuse from their partner and their anxiety levels, with the highest tendency occurring in relationships lasting more than two years.

Table 6. Normality Verbal Abuse and Anxiety

		Shapiro-Wilk Test for Bivariate Normality	
		Shapiro-Wilk	p
Verbal Abuse	- Anxiety	0.990	0.317

Table 6 shows the results of the bivariate data normality test between the verbal abuse and anxiety variables using the Shapiro–Wilk test, namely a Shapiro–Wilk value of 0.990 with a p-value of 0.317. Because the p-value is greater than the significance level ($p > 0.05$), it can be concluded that the data is normally distributed bivariately. The normality assumption is achieved, so Pearson's correlation analysis can be used appropriately to test the relationship between the two variables.

Table 7. Correlation Person

Pearson's Correlations		Verbal Abuse	Anxiety
1. Verbal Abuse	Pearson's r	—	—
	p-value	—	—
2. Anxiety	Pearson's r	0.855	—
	p-value	< .001	—

Table 7 shows the results of Pearson's correlation test between verbal abuse experienced by participants from their partners and anxiety levels. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) value obtained was 0.855 with a p value $< .001$. This indicates that there is a very strong and significant positive relationship between verbal abuse and anxiety. This means that the higher the level of verbal abuse experienced by participants in their romantic relationships, the higher their level of anxiety. A p -value well below 0.05 reinforces that this relationship is statistically significant and not coincidental. Based on the Pearson correlation results, it is stated that H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted, namely that there is a relationship between experiences of verbal abuse and anxiety levels among young adult women in romantic relationships.

The results of this study indicate a significant positive correlation between experiences of verbal abuse in romantic relationships and anxiety levels in young adult women ($r = 0.855$, $p < .001$). These findings suggest that the higher the intensity of verbal abuse experienced, the higher the level of anxiety felt by young adult women. These results show that verbal abuse in romantic relationships has a real impact on the psychological condition of victims, especially in increasing symptoms of anxiety. These findings are consistent with various previous studies, both domestic and international, which reveal that forms of violence in dating relationships, including verbal and emotional abuse, contribute significantly to increased psychological distress, such as anxiety, depression, and stress (Tarrío-Concejero et al., 2023; Castillo-González et al., 2024).

International research shows that verbal abuse cannot be considered a minor form of violence. Ackard et al. (2024) found that verbal abuse in dating relationships has an independent contribution to mental health decline, even after controlling for physical and sexual violence. These findings indicate that verbal abuse can directly cause psychological effects, including the emergence of anxiety symptoms such as fear, restlessness, difficulty sleeping, and a decrease in feelings of security within the relationship. Lortkipanidze et al. (2025) also confirmed that emotional-verbal abuse is a strong predictor of anxiety disorders, even acting as a mediator between partner violence and other psychological disorders such as depression. This means that experiences of verbal abuse often serve as an intermediary factor that worsens the psychological condition of victims more broadly.

Furthermore, Liu et al. (2023), in a factorial review of anxiety disorders in the student population, highlighted that interpersonal aggression, including verbal abuse in romantic relationships, is an important risk factor that increases vulnerability to anxiety disorders. Verbal aggression often attacks psychological aspects such as self-esteem, feelings of worth, and emotional security, which can ultimately activate chronic stress responses and increase the tendency for anxiety disorders to emerge. This factor is particularly relevant in the context of early adulthood, where dating is often a time of exploration of intimate relationships and the formation of emotional identity.

In the Indonesian context, these findings are also consistent with local studies describing the psychological dynamics of victims of dating violence. Khotimah (2023) found that victims of dating violence experience various psychological effects, including anxiety, fear, emotional stress, and helplessness, especially as a result of verbal and emotional abuse. According to

Qonitah, through a phenomenological study, it was reported that victims often experience symptoms such as difficulty sleeping, feelings of anxiety when interacting with their partner, and fear of verbal anger or insults from their partner. This shows that verbal violence has a profound impact on the psychological well-being of victims, even though it does not cause visible physical injuries.

According to Hutami et al. (2021), they add an important perspective on the prevalence of verbal abuse in dating relationships in Indonesia. Their research shows that verbal abuse is the most common form of abuse in dating relationships, but it is often normalized and not considered a serious form of abuse by either the victim or the perpetrator. This normalization causes victims to tend not to realize that they are experiencing violence, so they do not seek help or professional intervention. This condition can prolong exposure to abusive behavior and increase the risk of psychological disorders such as anxiety in the long term.

The results of this study can be explained through the framework of Emotion Regulation Theory. According to Gross and Ford (2024), emotion regulation is the process by which individuals monitor, evaluate, and modify their emotional responses to achieve adaptive goals. In the context of romantic relationships, verbal abuse can trigger intense emotional reactions such as fear, anger, or sadness. If individuals do not have adaptive emotion regulation strategies, such as cognitive reappraisal, these negative emotions will linger and reinforce anxiety. Dunkley (2021) explains that individuals who use avoidance or emotional suppression strategies when facing verbal abuse actually reinforce anxiety because these emotions are not resolved constructively. This explains why participants with high levels of verbal abuse experience show greater anxiety, not only because of the verbal abuse itself, but also because of how individuals manage their emotions after the incident.

In addition, Attachment Theory also provides an important explanation of the relationship between verbal abuse and anxiety in romantic relationships. According to Duschinsky et al. (2023), attachment dynamics in romantic relationships reflect early attachment patterns that shape emotional responses to intimacy and conflict. Individuals with anxious attachment styles tend to interpret their partner's criticism or negative expressions as a form of rejection or threat to attachment. When experiencing verbal abuse, individuals with anxious attachment will respond with increased fear of abandonment, self-doubt, and hypervigilance to signs of threat in the relationship, which ultimately increases anxiety. Meanwhile, individuals with secure attachment styles are better able to interpret conflict proportionally and use more effective emotion regulation strategies, so the impact of anxiety tends to be lower.

According to Dallos (2022), he adds that negative attachment narratives can reinforce perceptions of threat in relationships. If a person has had insecure past experiences, then experiences of verbal abuse from a partner will be processed through a narrative lens that makes the event seem more threatening and personal. This reinforces a maladaptive cycle such as verbal abuse triggers negative emotions, anxious attachment patterns amplify the perception of threat, maladaptive emotion regulation strategies fail to alleviate emotions, and ultimately anxiety increases chronically.

This study notes the high prevalence of verbal abuse and its impact on anxiety; preventive interventions need to focus on improving healthy relationship literacy among adolescents and young adults. Educational programs on forms of non-physical violence such as verbal abuse are essential so that young adult women can recognize the early signs of abusive behavior in dating relationships. In addition, social support and easily accessible counseling services also need to be strengthened so that victims can obtain psychological help before the effects of anxiety develop into more severe disorders.

Furthermore, the findings of this study confirm that verbal abuse and anxiety in romantic relationships are not only directly related, but also through internal psychological mechanisms in the form of emotional regulation and attachment patterns. This perspective is important

because it provides a deeper understanding of how verbal abuse affects mental health, especially for young adult women who are in the phase of intense romantic relationship development.

Overall, the results of this study reinforce the evidence that verbal abuse in dating relationships is not a minor form of violence, but rather an important risk factor for the emergence of anxiety disorders. These results are consistent with international and local findings that emphasize the significant psychological impact of verbal abuse on individuals, especially young adult women. From a practical standpoint, this understanding highlights the need for interventions that not only focus on stopping verbal abuse, but also help individuals develop adaptive emotion regulation strategies and form safer attachment patterns. Approaches such as emotion-focused therapy or attachment-based intervention can be used to help individuals understand and manage their emotional responses to their partners, thereby reducing anxiety levels. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of prevention, education, and psychological intervention to reduce the negative impact of verbal abuse on the mental health of victims.

CONCLUSION

This study shows a significant positive relationship between verbal abuse in dating relationships and anxiety levels in young adult women. These findings confirm that verbal abuse is not only a form of emotional aggression, but also an important psychological factor that contributes to the emergence of anxiety. Maladaptive emotion regulation mechanisms and anxious attachment patterns reinforce this relationship, explaining why individuals who experience verbal abuse are more prone to anxiety. Theoretically, these results expand our understanding of the emotional dynamics in romantic relationships. Practically, this research emphasizes the need for interventions that include education, strengthening of emotional regulation, and the formation of more secure attachments to prevent long-term psychological effects.

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