



# The Utilization of Toxic Relationship Victims' Legitimations on the Online Platform Quora

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**Abstract.** In the globalization era, world seems no boundaries. Information is easily accessible to everyone, including adolescents, regardless of their location or time. Adolescents who are in the stage of seeking for their identity, nowadays, they can absorb many values from all over the world through the development of globalization technology, such as the development of internet and social media. Those give great impacts to their development in thinking and socializing with others, especially the romantic relationship type that they want to be involved. Unfortunately, they caught in a very serious problem related to the unhealthy romantic relationship known as a toxic relationship. Adolescents who have a toxic relationship are ready to do anything for their partners, even it is something dangerous that can harm their being physically and mentally. From this phenomenon, this research investigated the utilization of legitimation from the victims to confirm their actions to the institution called a toxic relationship on Quora, a popular question and answer online platform in Indonesia. This research was qualitative research which implements Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach of Norman Fairclough. The legitimation strategies theory proposed by Leeuwen also employed in this research. The results indicated that victims of a toxic relationship on Quora, who were adolescents, used the legitimation strategies to substantiate the occurrences they acquired in their relationship. Those legitimations had an implication to confine them profoundly in the toxic relationship.

**Keywords:** legitimation, CDA, adolescent, toxic relationship, Quora

## 1 Introduction

In this globalization era where information can be abundant, people could perceive many things. Especially adolescents who are close to the digital technology can easily acquire knowledge. Rose, et al (2022) said that today's is a new digital era where adolescents are maintaining to master digital technology as they apply it as a tool for education, entertainment, social and sport [1]. This statement showed that adolescents demonstrate a proficiency in using technological resources. In America, the use of digital technology which was a smartphone were increased 73% in from 2015-2022; where the teens ages 15 to 17 were accessed their smartphone up to 98%. While, most American adolescent accessed Youtube with 95% and Tiktok with 67%. Next, it was

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Z. Rarastesa et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Communication, Language, Literature, and Culture (ICCoLiC 2024)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 883, [https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-321-4\\_5](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-321-4_5)

Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, twitch, WhatsApp, Reddit, Tumblr and Facebook (Vogels, Watnick, & Massarat, 2022) [2]. It means nowadays, most adolescents do their activities most in online platforms. They are searching information, watching movie and listening music online, studying online using their gadget, playing online games, and even socialize with their friends online in the social media. Because of that, adolescents are known as a digital native. They were born in a world with high technology was a central of daily life. The development of technology gave adolescents many chances to boarder they skill, build relationships in online and offline site simultaneously (Benvenuti, M., Wright, M., Naslund, J., Miers, C.A., 2023) [3].

Those recent behavioral patterns gave positive impacts as well as negative impacts to adolescents. Since, the excess information which adolescents obtained makes a changing perspective in how they recognized events occurred in their life. Handayani *et al.* (2020) stated that digital world gives access to all convenience and pleasure, but it will harm adolescent when it is not utilized wisely. Since adolescents have easy access to information, especially through social media, they involve in self-comparison with others and tend to portray themselves in a genuine or partial identity in digital world, especially in social media [4]. Moreover, Freeman & Neff (2021) have remarked the information that the adolescents have obtained in the digital world may be harmful as they are being more competitive, have a guilty feeling and internal pressure after perceiving information they have looked for. In addition, they also question about value they have known and experienced negative feeling about themselves after all [5]. From this explanation, adolescents seemed to have a changing perspective in the way they valued themselves due to new information gained in digital world. As Hattie (2014) said that self-concept and the conceptions of the self used interchangeably...depend on time and place [6]. Through the explanation above, the way adolescents changed their perspectives about themselves since the new information gathered, it showed adolescents considering some values appropriate for themselves. This phenomenon related to legitimation process.

Berger & Luckmann (in Fairclough, 2003) declared that legitimation provided the explanations and justifications of the salient elements of the institutional tradition [7]. Meanwhile, Beetham (1991) stated that legitimation where power was acquired and exercised according to justifiable rules, and with evidence of consent [8]. Digital world offered information which could provide numerous perspectives to accommodate adolescents having a legitimation for their action and value in their life, if it is used cautiously. However, adolescents with the abundant information they got in digital world, they were being suspected of adopting erroneous values. Thus, it could harm themselves while they were exploring about their true identity as a human being.

Through this research, Adolescents' legitimations were investigated on Quora. Adolescents were keen to share all their happiness, achievement and even sadness especially in the social media. Then, Quora was the well-known website to share their sad story in Indonesia.

In Quora, many adolescents share about their toxic relationship stories which were so alarming. Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (2023) has said that victims of relationship violence are increasing every year and the cause of that happened is a toxic relationship. Most adolescents actually aware that they were caught in a toxic relationship, but they still wanted to have that relationship [9]. Angreini and Nughroho (2022) said that the adolescent participants knew that they were in a toxic relationship which disrupted their social and personal activity but they chose to stay because of the fear of loss, the great affection and they were reluctant to start a new relationship [10]. Through this elaboration, it is very important to do research about the utilization of adolescents' legitimations related to their toxic relationship stories in Quora.

Researches related to adolescents and legitimations are varied. Martinez-González *et al* (2021) stated that females had a higher expectation of legitimation from peers, it means that females tend to be more concerned with social approval, afraid of abandonment. However, male teenagers showed a greater tendency to perceive adults as the sanctioners and neutral; their anxiety higher when they used diffusion of responsibility and dehumanization mechanisms to justify their behavior [11]. Sanchez-Barria and Miranda (2022) said that adolescents had similar levels of legitimation of radical actions before and after the *estallido*. It revealed the moderation tendency. Experiences of family and school political socialization can help lower the adolescent's support of radical actions in radicalized context [12]. Tutkal (2023) explained that legitimation and delegitimation of violence were continuous processes which could be changed by making cultural references and used adequate discursive strategies to the context [13]. It was clear from the researches above that legitimation could change adolescents actions related to things that intentionally formed. Thus, the research on legitimation used by adolescents related to their toxic relationship in Quora is truly important. It can give a deep insight to understand more how adolescents considered their acts related to their toxic relationship which harm themselves. In the end, for those who are struggling in a difficult toxic relationship, they can understand what happened in their relationships and can break the chain of the toxic relationship.

## 2 Research Methods

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was chosen as the research design of this research. Through CDA, the identification of legitimations used by the adolescents investigated by looking the meaning of the language use by adolescents. Catalano & Waugh (2020) said as meaning is a fragile and contested construction of the discourse participants, CDA facilitates to recognize the meaning in a discourse thoroughly [14]. Moreover, Fairclough (2003) stated that CDA is a form of critical social research aimed to attain a better understanding how societies work and produce both beneficial and detrimental effects and how the detrimental effects can be mitigated if not eliminated through transdisciplinary dialogue between language and discourse within social theory and research [7]. Besides, CDA analyzed how discourse is shaped at a micro-level (through

linguistic characteristics of texts), how the micro level connected through the meso-level (discursive practices), and the macro level (social practices embedded in social, cultural, political and ideological contexts in which language is used) (Iopez-Delflory, Perron & Miro Bonet, 2023) [15]. The source of data for this research obtained from a thread of toxic relationship victims' stories on Quora. Data for this research gathered by doing an observation on three Quora users, adolescents, who answered a thread "*Apakah Anda pernah terjebak dalam toxic relationship?* (have you ever been trapped in toxic relationship?)" [16]. In analyzing the data, the first step was investigated the micro level which focused on lexical and sentence structure choices related to legitimation. The second step was found out the meso level which focused on the production and reception of the text meaning related to legitimation. The third step was searched macro level which focused on the interpretation of the text related to legitimation.

### **3 Results and Discussion**

#### **3.1 Results**

##### **Micro Level**

In micro level, the legitimation discourse would be investigated through linguistics characteristics of texts. Fairclough (2003) said that a Legitimation is one of social research issues identified by concerning to the semantic relations due to gain power through building and creating reliance [7]. Moreover, Van Leeuwen (Fairclough, 2003) advocated four types of legitimations strategies namely Authorization, Rationalization, Moral and Mythopoesis [7]. In this research, adolescents who shared about their toxic relationship stories in Quora showed that they practiced legitimation strategies namely, rationalization-explanation (6 data) as the most used legitimation strategy by adolescents in Quora. The second position was Authorization (4 data) which categorized into authorization from expert (2 data), conformity (1 data) and tradition (1 data), and the last was Moral legitimation strategy namely, Moral-evaluation (4 data).

##### *Rationalization*

Rationalization is a legitimation referred to use institutional action, and to the knowledge society has constructed to endow them with cognitive validity (Fairclough, 2003) [7]. There are two types of rationalization, first instrumental consists of moralized goal, uses and effects of social practice; second, theoretical consists of definition, explanation and prediction (Leeuwen in Ananda & Sari, 2021) [17]. In this research the Quora user's answer no. 1 showed how she utilized the legitimation strategy of Rationalization-Explanation since she explained about why something had done (Leeuwen in Ananda & Sari, 2021) [17]. She told

*“Kisahny bermula saat saya berpacaran dengan teman saya sendiri. Si teman ini dikenal baik, pintar dan juga kebetulan saya dekat dengan dia sudah lama, namun hanya sebagai teman.”*

Through this statement, we could see her making a rationalization especially the explanation categorize. *“Si teman ini dikenal baik, pintar”*, in this sentence appeared a suffix *“di”* in the verb *“kenal”* which showed the sentence was a passive sentence focused on the object (her boyfriend). That sentence was clear showing the quality of her boyfriend which was known as *“baik”* (kind) and *“pintar”* (smart). Through the passive sentence, she considered her boyfriend qualities based on her knowledge perceived in society and for adolescents it could be a digital world standard. The word *“smart”* specifically in here indicated a characteristic of a successful modern person who had a good knowledge because he was well-educated one. Through that sentence, Quora user no.1 tried to give a reason why she decided to choose dating with her boyfriend; a person with such criteria namely kind and smart were valid to be a good boyfriend. So, in that sentence, the rationalization-explanation seen. Then, she told

*“Saya menerima ajakan dia pacaran karena saya yakin dia tidak main-main. Dia bilang, dia serius, tidak main-main dan sudah berdoa. Saya merasa saya bisa mempercayakan hati saya kepada dia karena dia sahabat saya. Saya juga tahu dia dikenal baik juga di mata orang lain. Dia juga mapan dan rajin bekerja. Masa iya sih sahabat menyakiti? Begitu pikir saya waktu itu.”*

Her answer above depicted the rationalization-explanation continued. She said that *“Dia bilang, dia serius, tidak main-main dan sudah berdoa.”* this sentence was a declarative sentence as it conveyed series of fact, *“dia serius”* (he was serious), *“tidak main main”* (no playing around on dating), and *“sudah berdoa”* (had a prayer to God), related to her boyfriend’s effort to ask her out on a date. Through that sentence, she gained an understanding that a man who was serious in a relationship was the one who said he was serious, promised to not mess around and prayed before he decided ask someone to date. It also reflected her criteria of a good boyfriend. So, it became a reason she chose to involve dating with him. Next, she explained about another good boyfriend criteria in a declarative sentence that he should be a best friend in the sentence *“dia sahabat saya”*. Then she said *“Dia juga mapan dan rajin bekerja”*, this sentence defined the other criteria to be a good boyfriend were *“mapan”* (well-established) and *“rajin bekerja”* (hard-working) which were a typical of successful modern person portrayed in media. Then, she told *“Masa iya sih sahabat menyakiti?”*, this was not a literal question which needed an answer. It was a rhetorical question to confirm her decision was right that time. Moreover, she said in another declarative sentence *“Begitu pikir saya waktu itu.”*, this sentence strongly explained in that time her knowledge was not the same as her knowledge now. This indicated that the knowledge she had in that time became her key to validate her action choosing to stay in the toxic relationship as she did the rationalization-explanation of considering good boyfriend criteria for her. Another rationalization-explanation also demonstrated here

*“Awal pacaran, semua serba cepat karena kami sudah mengenali satu sama lain. Sampai akhirnya pada beberapa kali kami berantem, dia melakukan silent treatment. Silent treatment ini menurut saya adalah cara terkejut karena dia membuat saya ketakutan setengah mati untuk diputuskan. Akhirnya, dalam beberapa kali konflik, dia menghilang dan entah kenapa, saya mau saja minta maaf duluan kepada dia seperti memohon-mohon.”*

The sentences above were declarative sentences showing facts she caught in a toxic relationship. Through those, we could recognize how she suffered in that toxic relationship. However, she chose to stay due to her fear of the boyfriend's silent treatment as she said *“Sampai akhirnya pada beberapa kali kami berantem, dia melakukan silent treatment. Silent treatment ini menurut saya adalah cara terkejut karena dia membuat saya ketakutan setengah mati untuk diputuskan. Akhirnya, dalam beberapa kali konflik, dia menghilang dan entah kenapa, saya mau saja minta maaf duluan kepada dia seperti memohon-mohon.”*. The statement above explained that she understood whether a good relationship was to always be together even the problem between she and her boyfriend was not discussed appropriately and there was still a misunderstanding unsolved; as she said *“minta maaf duluan kepada dia seperti memohon-mohon”*. Here, she apologized to him first and begged to her boyfriend to not angry anymore to her because she scared to lose him. In another hand, we could conclude how she had a perspective that once engaged in a romantic relationship they must to be together. It was okay if she begged and apologized first as long as they did not break up. That sentence explained how her knowledge made her had a perspective about a type of a good relationship which was unhealthy, unrealistic as she sacrificed her pride and those looked the same as in romantic movies. That action caught her to stay in a toxic relationship. Her action was counted into legitimization type of rationalization-explanation.

In Quora user no. 2, her answer also showed rationalization-explanation to legitimate their action staying in toxic relationship. She told

*“Dia juga cerita waktu lagi deketin aku yg cuek ini, ada beberapa cewe yg deketin dia dan yang dia sebutin itu cantik2, bisa dibilang lebih cantik dari aku. Disitu dia kayak ngeledak gitu, "aku lebih milih kamu yg cuek loh daripada mereka". Karena obrolan malam itu, aku mulai merubah sikapku pelan2, ditambah lagi temennya sering bilang ke aku kalo dia tuh suka galau gara2 aku terlalu cuek. Aku mulai lebih perhatian dan sering meluangkan waktu untuk nunggu dia biar bisa pulang bareng, sampai akhirnya masuk 4 atau 5 bulan kita pacaran, kita berdua dikenal sebagai pasangan yg lengket banget kayak perangko, kemana mana pasti bareng.”*

She used declarative sentences to explain about facts that she stayed in the toxic relationship. Those sentences showed a fact that her boyfriend was able to control her. Her boyfriend reminisced the time they started dating as in *“Dia juga cerita waktu lagi*

*deketin aku yg cuek ini.*”. Then, he compared her behavior “*yang cuek*” (an indifferent person) to other beautiful girl who used to be close to him, as proven in the sentence “*ada beberapa cewe yg deketin dia dan yang dia sebutin itu cantik2*”, by saying “*aku lebih milih kamu yg cuek loh daripada mereka*”. In that sentence, her boyfriend implicitly had an intention to notice how big he sacrificed for her. The word “*loh*” was used as a strong emphasize of his sacrifice. So that, because of her boyfriend statement before, she agreed to change her attitude and her action toward her boyfriend, as proven by the sentence “*Karena obrolan malam itu, aku mulai merubah sikapku pelan2*”. That sentence defined how she rationalized the knowledge she had after her boyfriend statement that a good relationship should care by willing to sacrifice for each other, especially for her boyfriend’s happiness. Moreover, she said other declarative sentences “*ditambah lagi temennya sering bilang ke aku kalo dia tuh suka galau gara2 aku terlalu cuek. Aku mulai lebih perhatian...*”. The sentence “*temennya sering bilang*” and “*dia suka galau gara2 aku terlalu cuek*” are the declarative sentences showed her boyfriend who implicitly forced her to make a sacrifice for her boyfriend happiness. The word “*mulai*” (started) emphasized and defined her willingness to consciously sacrifice herself for her boyfriend happiness and stay in that relationship as an ideal couple. We could see in this declarative sentence “*sampai akhirnya masuk 4 atau 5 bulan kita pacaran, kita berdua dikenal sebagai pasangan yg lengket banget kayak peranko*”. Furthermore, the rationalization-explanation appeared again and it made her remained in toxic relationship, as she told

*“Dia menjadi super posesif sama apapun yang berkaitan tentang aku. Mulai dari sosmed sampai kegiatan aku diatur sama dia. Dan aku nurut dong, nurut banget, aku paling takut kalau dia marah. Dia kalau marah omongannya kasar, kadang kalau aku udh ngga tahan dan nangis baru deh dia berhenti, minta maaf dan baik2in aku lagi.”*

The statements above showed the declarative sentences used to point her toxic relationship. Those sentences showed she knew she was suffered because of her boyfriend’s action which too controlling, but she still remained in that relationship. From this declarative sentence “*Dan aku nurut dong, nurut banget, aku paling takut kalau dia marah.*”, she emphasized her words in “*takut*” (afraid) and “*kalau dia marah*” (if he got angry) that were related to a value she had about kinds of a normal relationship was the one that made her boyfriend not angry or happy. That perspective she did, it cost her to stay longer in the toxic relationship. In the other declarative sentence, “*Dia kalau marah omongannya kasar, kadang kalau aku udh ngga tahan dan nangis baru deh dia berhenti, minta maaf dan baik2in aku lagi.*”, it showed how she rationalized that a normal relationship was to make each other happy in the relationship. As she emphasized in the words “*kasar*” (harsh), “*nangis*” (cried), “*berhenti*” (stop), “*minta maaf*” (apologize) and “*baik2in*” (be nice to her). These series of words were a reflection how her perspective toward a normal relationship was, to make each other happy, where those words demonstrated that her boyfriend made her happy because her boyfriend’s attitude changed to be good as she cried. In the other hand, she made her boyfriend happy because she obeyed to do things her boyfriend ordered. Her knowledge

about a type of a normal relationship was unhealthy and unrealistic such as depicted in the romantic movies. She ignored her boyfriend harsh words and made a rationalization explanation. Consequently, this kind of perspective legitimated her to stay longer in toxic relationship.

In Quora user no. 3, Rationalization-explanation is demonstrated in her answer. As she said

*“Saat saya kelas 3 SMA, saya menjalin sebuah hubungan dengan seseorang yang satu tahun diatas saya. Pada awalnya semua terasa baik-baik saja namun semakin kesini, setiap saya bercerita akan suatu hal, dia selalu merespon dan melihat dari sisi negatif. Perkataannya sangat tajam, tidak berpikir terlebih dahulu. Dia pernah berkata bahwa saya sangat lemah, mental kerupuk, sampah di aliran sungai, penghambat, bodoh, dan hal-hal negatif lainnya. Kalau saya protes dengan ucapannya, ia akan menjawabnya dengan “baru diginiin doang udah ga kuat mentalnya, gimana nanti di dunia kerja dll?” Saya overthinking akan segala hal, semua perkataannya sangat mempengaruhi saya. Saya jadi sering tidak percaya diri dan bertanya-tanya apakah saya seburuk itu? Saya selalu menyalahkan diri saya sendiri”*

In here, she used declarative and interrogative sentences to explain facts related to toxic relationship that she experienced. In the beginning of her answer, she explained the fact that her boyfriend was someone who was older than her in a declarative sentence as she said *“saya menjalin sebuah hubungan dengan seseorang yang satu tahun diatas saya. Pada awalnya semua terasa baik-baik saja ...”*. It was clear that the declarative sentence above portrayed she had a knowledge about a type of a good boyfriend before, as she emphasized *“Pada awalnya semua terasa baik-baik saja”* (at first everything felt fine). That phrase defined how her boyfriend met her expectation. That phrase validated that she felt comfortable and okay to her boyfriend's behaviours. It was clear that she rationalized why she dated with her boyfriend. Besides, if we saw the following declarative sentence, *“Saya overthinking akan segala hal, semua perkataannya sangat mempengaruhi saya”* that sentence validated her action to believe in her boyfriend's words. In that sentence, the word *“overthinking”* which meant she worried everything her boyfriend said. It was connected with the word *“mempengaruhi”* (influencing her) which reflected that she strongly considered her boyfriend that one year older than her as a person who knew everything very well. It was also proven by her statement in interrogative sentence which was a rhetorical question *“Saya jadi sering tidak percaya diri dan bertanya-tanya apakah saya seburuk itu?”*. The question she asked was not a real question that needed an answer. It was the way to emphasize her perspective that she was the problematic one, as she explained in this declarative sentence *“Saya selalu menyalahkan diri saya sendiri”*. Through the statement above, it was clear she rationalized her knowledge related to criteria of a good boyfriend which was an adult boyfriend, even it was only one year different in age, should be obeyed. In here, seniority defined her standard in her boyfriend criteria which related to terms in the office. It means a term used related to modern office condition where there existed a senior staff (who had extensive experience in the office) and a junior staff (who was a new one in



the office). Through that explanation, she did a rationalization explanation to validate why she stayed in toxic relationship even though she knew it harmed her.

### *Authorization*

Authorization which legitimation referred to the authority of tradition, costum, law and persons in whom some of kind of institutional authority vested (Fairclough, 2003) [7]. There are six types of Authorization namely personal authority, expert authority, role model authority, impersonal authority, authority of tradition, authority of conformity (Leeuwen in Alamri, 2017) [18]. Legitimation types of Authorization-Expert, was shown in Quora user no 1, as she said that

*“Pernah. Saya sempat syok karena terjebak di dalam toxic relationship selama 3 tahun lamanya. Saya baru tahu setelah saya putus dan pergi ke psikolog untuk pemulihan mental.”*

In the answer above, she used declarative sentences to show facts related to her experience in the toxic relationship. In the first declarative sentence above, she told that for almost 3 years she never knew that she was in a toxic relationship but the validation from a psychologist given her information that indeed she was a victim of a toxic relationship. The word “*syok*” when it connected to the phrase “*pergi ke psikolog*”, it emphasized how she was shocked about her condition after she consulted it with a psychologist. This case was an example of authorization given by an expert in a professional institutional which made her recognized her condition. Then, Authorization of conformity appeared when she said

*“Saya baru sadar betapa toksiknya dia, betapa citra dia begitu baik di antara teman-temannya dan bahkan para dosen dari kampus kami begitu mengagungkan dia. Tapi nyatanya, itu hanyalah sebuah topeng yang dia kenakan.”*

Here, the sentences showed she used declarative sentences to depict she caught in a toxic relationship because of the authorization of conformity. Through the declarative sentence above, we could see some respectable people which were his boyfriend’s friends and some lecturers legitimated her boyfriend’s attitudes as a good person as it emphasized in the phrase “*begitu mengagungkan dia*”. Thus, it made her believed and had a perspective that everything related to her boyfriend actions was also good for her. This type of authorization made her stay in toxic relationship.

Quora user no.2 portrayed Authorization-tradition, as she said

*“Salah satu penyebab terjebak dalam "toxic relationship" adalah karena udah jadi bucin, "budak cinta dan buta sama cinta" jadi apa aja yang dilakukan pasangan kita terima aja, padahal orang sekitar udah banyak yang bisikin kalau itu ngga bener dan udah kelewat batas.”*

This answer used declarative sentences to convey the fact causing the toxic relationship. We could see that she emphasized in the word “*bucin*” and then she strongly highlighted “*budak cinta dan buta sama cinta*” (a slave to love and blinded by love), it showed that there were characteristics when adolescents had a romantic relationship, they always trap and devote their being to sacrifice for their partners. This was strongly proven by another declarative sentence “*padahal orang sekitar udah banyak yang bisikin kalau itu ngga bener dan udah kelewat batas*”, that sentence emphasized that it was a normal habit for adolescents who were in a romantic relationship not listening suggestions to people’s who worried to them. This habit normalization was a typical of authorization-tradition that made Quora user no.2 still hold on to toxic relationship in that time.

In Quora user no.3, she said

*“Hingga akhirnya saat saya mengikuti tes psikologi mengenai kesehatan mental, hasilnya membuat psikolog nya pun bertanya-tanya dengan saya.”*

She used a declarative sentence to show facts related to her toxic relationship story. That declarative sentence showed, she did not recognize herself was in a toxic relationship. As she emphasized in the word “*Hingga akhirnya*”. The expert, the psychologist, helped her to give her knowledge about her condition. Then, she realized that the relationship she was in made her mentally ill, as she said “*hasilnya membuat psikolog nya pun bertanya-tanya dengan saya*”. This declarative sentence was an example of authorization given by an expert in a professional institutional which made her recognized that she trapped in a toxic relationship.

### *Moral*

Moral is legitimation referred to value systems (Fairclough, 2003) [7]. There are three sub-categories of Moral legitimation, namely evaluation, abstraction and analogy (Leeuwen in Ananda & Nova, 2021) [17]. In Quora user no. 1, she said

*”Lucunya, setelah itu, dia menghubungi saya lagi, meminta pertimbangan tentang hasil psikolog. Manusia macam apa yang berperilaku seperti itu? Seakan kata putus yang ia ancam dan ungkapkan berulang kali tak menyakiti hati orang lain. Saya langsung tolak mentah-mentah.”*

She used declarative sentences and an interrogative sentence to demonstrated moral evaluation. In the first declarative sentence “*Lucunya, setelah itu, dia menghubungi saya lagi, meminta pertimbangan tentang hasil psikolog*”, it was started with a word “*lucunya*” to evaluate how ridiculous her boyfriend’s behaviour. Then, she used an interrogative sentence “*Manusia macam apa yang berperilaku seperti itu?*”, it was not a literal question that needed an answer. It was a rhetorical sentence which used to evaluate her boyfriend’s behaviour. Then, she added a declarative sentence to illustrate

her feeling toward her boyfriend toxic behaviour “*Seakan kata putus yang ia ancam dan ungkapkan berulang kali tak menyakiti hati orang lain*”. In that declarative sentence, the word “seakan-akan” it was a comparative conjunction that highlighted the evaluation moral of her boyfriend due to her boyfriend’s decision to break up and come back again after he hurt her. It was clear those sentences depicted facts to evaluate the behaviour of her toxic boyfriend. Moreover, she said

*“Saya juga sadar bahwa saya banyak makan hati dan tidak bahagia saat bersama dia. Beruntung Tuhan memutuskan saya dengan dia sekarang dan saya tidak jadi menikahi dia.”*

The statement above also used declarative sentences to show fact related to her boyfriend’s moral evaluation. As it demonstrated in the evaluative sentence “*Saya juga sadar bahwa saya banyak makan hati dan tidak bahagia saat bersama dia*”. Here, she emphasized the word “*banyak makan hati*” and “*tidak bahagia*” compared to “*Beruntung*”. Those words showed evaluative adjectives related to fact that she experienced many disappointments and unhappiness in that relationship and she felt so lucky after the breakup. It was clear those sentences depicted she evaluated her partner’s moral which counted into a toxic one.

Meanwhile, Quora user no.2 said that

*“Akhirnya aku mutusin buat udahan, dia sempat berkelak dan bilang itu pikiran dia waktu masih labil dan udah berubah, cuma aku yang ada dalam rencana masa depannya, halaahh, tidak semudah itu buat aku percaya lagi. Keputusan aku udh bulat.”*

She used declarative sentences to portray facts related to her toxic relationship story. That sentence counted into a moral evaluation as there was an evaluated word “*halaahh*” that created a moral judgement effect. That word contradicted the facts related to her partner’s moral with her perspective toward him. That word also showed her perspective to take a decision to not believe him anymore who was a toxic one. So, it counted into moral evaluation.

In Quora user no.3, she also demonstrated a moral evaluation to legitimate her perspective related to toxic relationship. She said

*“Akhirnya kami selesai karena dia bersama yang lain hahaha dan saya bersyukur atas itu! Sejak saat itu saya merasa bahwa yang kemarin adalah hubungan yang sangat beracun alias toxic relationship!”*

Here, she used declarative sentences to show facts related to her boyfriend’s toxic behaviour. The moral evaluation was clearly shown in those sentences, especially in the evaluative sentence “*Akhirnya kami selesai karena dia bersama yang lain*” which compared to evaluative adjective “*bersyukur*”. Those depicted her feeling toward the

breakup that she was grateful as the toxic relationship ended since her boyfriend cheated on her. Through those, we could see how she established a moral perspective to evaluate her boyfriend's moral related to the toxic relationship they were in.

### Meso Level

In meso level, we would see that the production of legitimation used were also be consumed by other Quora users. The answer of Quora user no.1 who produce the text got a support "dukungan naik" for total votes 21. It meant that there were 21 Quora users who gave support for her answer to be placed in the top of the thread. Moreover, there were 2 Quora users who shared her answer to others or to other chat rooms in Quora.



Fig 1. Text consumptions for Quora user no.1 answer

For the answer of Quora user no. 2, she got 38 votes to be the must-read answer. Besides, her answer was replied by another Quora user that showed agreement to her decision broke up with her toxic boyfriend. As seen in this sentence "*Rasanya mba ud membuat keputusan dengan tepat*".



Fig 2. Text consumptions for Quora user no.2 answer

For the answer of Quora user no.3, she got 12 votes to be up to the top of the thread and 3 replies from other Quora users. The first reply gave a sympathy, an appreciation for sharing the toxic relationship story, a hope that no girls caught in the toxic relationship and information to encourage girls to be confident. As seen in this sentence "*I'm so sorry to hear that. Terima kasih telah membagi kisahmu, semoga tidak ada perempuan yang terjebak dalam toxic relationship lagi. Perempuan harus tau bahwa diri mereka berharga, tidak peduli penilaian orang lain terhadapnya*". Then, the second reply was from Quora user no.3 who thanked for the thread since it gave a space for her to share her toxic relationship and hoped her story would open other girls' eyes related to the danger of the toxic relationship. As she replied "*Terima kasih juga sudah mengajukan pertanyaan ini kepada saya! Semoga bisa membuka mata orang-orang diluar sana yang belum tersadar akan toxic relationship iniii*".

The third reply was from another Quora user who got surprised related to the psychologist diagnosis as he said “*Wah, serem banget psikolog itu!*”.



**Fig 3.** Text consumptions for Quora user no.3 answer

From the explanation above, it demonstrated that the three answers, which were data of the research, consumed by other Quora users.

### Macro Level

In Macro level, we would see the discourse of toxic relationship related to social, culture, political and ideological context. The practice of toxic relationship in adolescents, it was close to the modern era where the development of technology rose rapidly. It was also in line with the massive growing of internet. Through the technology and internet development, adolescents got many new values from all over the world. In Indonesia, the majority of adolescents appeared to have a frequent engagement with internet. Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association (APJII) declared in their survey in 2022 that adolescents in age 13-18 years old showed 99.16 % of internet engagement [19]. It was very high as adolescents using it not only for entertainment but for studying, socializing and sport. Handayani *et al.* (2020) stated that digital world gave access to all convenience and pleasure but it would harm adolescent when it was not utilized wisely [4].

That was proven that Khoirot (2016) said in her research that the influence of technological advances was correlated with the changing attitudes in elementary school students with average age 12-15 years old. The one changing attitude was the dating style they had [20]. Lestery (2015) revealed in her research that the adolescent dating style led to the behaviours that they should not do at their age such as kissing, touching sensitive part of the body and doing an intercourse. The factors were the impact of social interaction, technological advancement through proliferation of digital devices and internet connectivity [21].

Since, the dating or the romantic relationship were a normal thing for adolescents in modern era, adolescents caught in the toxic relationship. In 2023 Annual Notes from *Komnas Perempuan* (National Commission on Violence against Women) reported that the majority of violence victims were school or university students with a total of 2.139 cases. In addition, the most dominated violence, with 3.498 cases, was the psychological violence [22]. The psychological violence was counted into toxic relationship. According to Greyman, L. *et al* (2023)

“Toxic relationship is not always an abusive relationship. Abuse could be more overt—verbal and physical. Toxicity can be more subdued...the person experiencing the toxicity could often find themselves struggling to figure out what’s real and what’s not..there was an emotional abuse which the partner used to control and manipulate the victim without leaving any “physical” evidence.” [23]

Through the explanation above, it could be seen how alarming the adolescent romantic relationship since many of them trapped in the toxic relationship and it led adolescents to the physical violence. Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (2023) said that victims of relationship violence are increasing every year and the cause of that happened is a toxic relationship [9]. Moreover, there were lots of news got public attentions related to toxic relationship.

For examples several cases of toxic relationships in Indonesia have gone viral and attracted a lot of public attentions. The first case was a toxic relationship from a teenage girl who got physical abuse from her boyfriend in 2021 [24]. This story went viral as her older sister sharing the story in twitter. Her older sister said that the abuse happened because of the jealousy of her younger sister's boyfriend. He was unhappy that her younger sister made friends with many male students in school. Then, he invited her younger sister to his house but she declined it. As her younger sister rejected the invitation, he threatened to spread photos of her when she slept with him. After that threat, her younger sister agreed to come to his house. Then, her younger sister got physical abused there.



**Fig 4.** The first viral news related to toxic relationship

For the second viral news was Novia Widyasari suicide case [25]. This case got the public attentions as her confession related to her romantic story in her Quora account revealed. She got sexual, physical and psychological abuse from her boyfriend and her boyfriend's family. She was drugged by her boyfriend and sexually assaulted. She got pregnant twice and her boyfriend forced her to do the abortion twice with illegal abortion drugs. Before that, she told her boyfriend's family that she got pregnant but her boyfriend's family rejected her to get married with her boyfriend soon. After all the up and down in her relationship, she depressed and decided to end her life. Her toxic relationship story made the public furious. The public did a movement in Instagram and twitter with a hashtag #savenoviawidyasari to get a justice for Novia. The public hoped the court could give her boyfriend a heavy sentence.



Fig 5. The second viral news related to toxic relationship

### Tren Indonesia

- 1 · Berita · Populer  
**#SAVENOVIAWIDYASARI**  
17,8 rb Tweet
- 2 · Hiburan · Populer  
**#9MStayWithBright**  
227 rb Tweet
- 3 · K-pop · Populer  
**#FarhanUNITY**
- 4 · Populer  
**GreyAp**  
5.921 Tweet

Fig 6. The hashtag for defending justice for Novia in twitter [26]

- # #savenoviawidyasari  
13,325 posts
- # #savenoviawidyasarahayu  
21 posts
- # #savenoviawidyasariyuk  
1,000 posts
- # #savenoviawidyasari ❤️❤️  
10 posts
- # #savenoviawidyasari♥️  
9 posts
- # #savenoviawidyasari\_  
6 posts

Fig 7. The hashtag for defending justice for Novia in Instagram [27]

Through the explanation above, toxic relationship in adolescents was so dangerous. Toxic relationship made adolescents got emotional and psychological abuse that led them to a depression and a suicide action.

### 3.2 Discussion

From the results at the micro level, it indicated that the three Quora user answers used declarative sentences predominantly. Declarative sentences used to expose facts related to their toxic relationship story. As declarative sentences known for its function to inform knowledge someone had to others. According to Greenbaum, S & Nelson, G. (2013) declarative sentences correspond to statements and used chiefly to convey information [28]. Those sentences also revealed 4 legitimation strategies namely rationalization-explanation, authority of conformity, authority of tradition and authorization from the expert. The first three legitimation strategies showed Quora users trapped in a toxic relationship longer and the other legitimation strategy, authorization from the expert made the Quora user was aware of her psychological condition in the toxic relationship she experienced. Besides, the passive sentence also found which carried out the Quora user's intention to focus on explaining the characteristics of her toxic boyfriend as the object topic of her toxic relationship story on Quora. As Azar (2002) said that the passive was most frequently used when it was not known or not important to know who was the subject [29]. The passive sentence revealed a legitimation used was rationalization-explanation. That legitimation strategy type cost her experienced toxic relationship longer. Therefore, the legitimation strategies used appeared to validate their decisions related to toxic relationship they had experienced. It was due to gain power to make her answer in Quora thread valid and it could give an overview of how to experience the toxic relationship to other girls. So that, it could warn other girls from experiencing a similar situation.

Then, the interrogative sentence also found. However, it was a rhetorical question that not need an answer. According to Greenbaum, S & Nelson, G. (2013) the rhetorical questions do not expect a reply since they are equivalent of forceful statements [28]. The Quora user used the rhetorical question to force herself to believe and doubt her action toward the behaviour of her toxic boyfriend. The rhetorical question performed in order to get a validation related to her decision when she was in a toxic relationship. She chose a decision to believe all words of her toxic boyfriend said and that made her trapped in toxic relationship longer. That rhetorical question counted into the legitimation strategy name rationalization-explanation. In addition, there was another rhetorical question found. That rhetorical question related to her breakup decision with her toxic boyfriend. She evaluated her toxic boyfriend's moral and made a strong decision to really end the toxic relationship. That rhetorical question counted to the legitimation moral evaluation. Through the use of the legitimation strategies—rationalization explanation and moral evaluation, it revealed that the Quora users utilized legitimations to achieve power in their answers to inform other girls about the experience of a toxic relationship. So that, their experiences could be a knowledge to prevent them trapped in toxic relationship.



At the meso level, their answers as the text produced, those were consumed by other Quora users. The other Quora users gave votes on “Dukungan Naik” button, gave the responses through comments and shared the answers to other chat rooms on Quora. It reflected that many people agreed with the intentions of the three Quora users written in their answers. We could understand the three Quora users’ intention by seeing the legitimation utilized in the micro level that they wanted to educate other girl to be aware and not to be trapped in toxic relationship. Those intentions could be understood by other Quora users as the answers got many supports.

At the macro level, we could see how toxic relationship was the essential issue happened in adolescents in society. There were many cases that alarming and led to suicide actions. Even public defended the justice for the toxic relationship victims. So, it demonstrated that toxic relationship was a big problem in adolescent romantic relationships. Public became aware that toxic relationship could harm adolescents’ mental health and life. Thus, the thread of explaining the toxic relationship experiences were needed to give the information related to toxic relationship, prevent adolescent staying in toxic relationship and encourage people who trapped in toxic relationship to terminate that relationship.

## 4 Conclusion

From the research result and discussion, it concluded that at micro level the declarative sentences and the passive sentence used to show facts related to their toxic relationship. Then, the interrogative sentences which rhetorical questions appeared to show how adolescents forced themselves to believe, doubt and evaluate the behaviour of their toxic boyfriends. Through those sentences, it also revealed the legitimation strategies used by adolescents. There were three types of legitimations used by the adolescents who shared their toxic relationship story in Quora. First, Rationalization-explanation which used the most (6 data); rationalization-explanation demonstrated adolescents considering knowledge they had to define about what occurred in their relationship that made a consequent for adolescents remained longer in their toxic relationship. Second, Authorization (4 data) which has 3 categories: (a) Authorization from the expert (2 data) made adolescents know about their condition that toxic relationship influenced their mental health, (b) Authority of conformity (1 data) and (c) Authority of tradition (1 data) which both of them revealed that adolescents caught in toxic relationship longer. The last, legitimation from Moral; Evaluation Moral (4 data) used by adolescent as they were thankful for the breakup with their toxic relationship partner. Through the utilization of legitimation strategies, they tried to achieve power in their answers due to make their answers valid to inform it to people on Quora. At the meso level, the text produced consumed by other Quora users. They gave votes on “Dukungan Naik” button, gave the responses through comments and shared the answers to other chat rooms on Quora. It could be concluded that Quora users supported the three Quora users’ intentions which hoped the adolescents could use the information given about

their toxic relationship experiences. So that, the adolescents could prevent themselves from being trapped in toxic relationship. At the macro level, the discourse of toxic relationship was received a great attention from public. It was because a considerable number of adolescents were subjected to physical, sexual, psychological violence, and in some cases even lose their lives as a result of involvement in toxic relationships. The threads on Quora pertaining to the understanding of toxic relationships were significantly important. It could be utilized by adolescents as a guide to avoid the danger of toxic relationships. Moreover, from the research results, it demonstrated that legitimation detained adolescents in toxic relationship specifically legitimation types of rationalization-explanation, authority of conformity and tradition. Still, it showed that legitimation—Authority from expert and moral evaluation, also important for adolescents as a foundation in their perspective to identify and solve the problems especially for those who involved in toxic relationship. Thus, government and parent should give knowledge to adolescents in promoting types of healthy romantic relationship in juvenescence.

**Disclosure of Interests.** The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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