

NYIMAK

Journal of Communication

Nyimak Journal of Communication

Vol. 9

No. 1

Pages 1 - 171

March 2025

ISSN 2580-3808



Published By:
Department of Communication Science
Faculty of Social and Political Science
Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang

Journal Address

Program Studi Ilmu Komunikasi Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik

UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH TANGERANG

Jl. Perintis Kemerdekaan I No. 33 Kota Tangerang, Banten 15118

Website : <http://jurnal.umt.ac.id/index.php/nyimak>

Email : journalnyimak@fisipumt.ac.id

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— **Jefri Audi Wempi, Chrisdina, Rully** —

Self-Disclosure in Toxic Relationship in Victims of Affairs Under the Suspicion of Rifka Annisa Foundation

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ABSTRACT

Infidelity can occur due to a lack of quality interpersonal communication between partners. This study aims to analyze communication patterns in toxic relationships and how communication is used as a strategy in dealing with infidelity in victims of infidelity who are under the auspices of the Rifka Annisa Foundation. The theory used in this study is the theory of relationship stages, where relationships occur gradually, moving from initial contact to deeper intimacy and sometimes even shifting to damage. This study uses a qualitative approach. Data collection was carried out through documentation, observation, and in-depth interviews with six people. In this study, data analysis was carried out interactively. The results of the study found that self-disclosure plays an important role in the stages of toxic relationships. However, if there is a decrease in self-disclosure, it can lead to potential conflict and injustice. Self-disclosure is related to the victim's perception of injustice in understanding the complexity of interpersonal conflict because interpersonal communication built between partners tends to be manipulative, and responses to infidelity vary, including proactive efforts to improve relationships, focus on self-well-being, seek help from a counselor and break off relations with a partner.

Keywords: Interpersonal communication, relationship stages, self-disclosure, toxic relationship

ABSTRACT

Perselingkuhan dapat terjadi akibat kurangnya kualitas komunikasi interpersonal antara pasangan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pola komunikasi dalam hubungan toksik dan bagaimana komunikasi digunakan sebagai strategi dalam menghadapi perselingkuhan pada korban perselingkuhan yang berada di bawah naungan Yayasan Rifka Annisa. Teori yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah teori tahapan hubungan, dimana hubungan terjadi secara bertahap, bergerak dari kontak awal menuju keintiman yang lebih dalam dan terkadang bahkan bergeser ke arah kerusakan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui dokumentasi, observasi, dan wawancara mendalam terhadap enam orang. Dalam penelitian ini, analisis data dilakukan secara interaktif. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa pengungkapan diri memegang peran penting dalam tahapan hubungan toksik. Namun, apabila terjadi penurunan pengungkapan diri, maka dapat menimbulkan potensi konflik dan ketidakadilan. Pengungkapan diri terkait dengan persepsi korban tentang ketidakadilan dalam memahami kompleksitas konflik interpersonal karena komunikasi interpersonal yang dibangun antara pasangan cenderung manipulatif, dan respons terhadap perselingkuhan bervariasi, termasuk upaya proaktif untuk meningkatkan hubungan, fokus pada kesejahteraan diri, mencari bantuan dari konselor dan memutuskan hubungan dengan pasangan

Kata Kunci: Komunikasi antarpribadi, tahapan hubungan, pengungkapan diri, hubungan beracun

Submitted: 2024-08-13

Revised: 2025-02-25

Accepted: 2025-03-10

Available Online: March 2025

CITATION: Utomo, A. S., Syukri, Harjo, F. E. S., & Widhihatmini. (2025). Self-Disclosure in Toxic Relationship in Victims of Affairs Under the Suspicion of Rifka Annisa Foundation. *Nyimak Journal of Communication*, 9(1), 1–22.



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INTRODUCTION

Effective interpersonal communication can be an important tool in the process of self-reconstruction for both perpetrators and victims of infidelity. Intense communication between partners can help rediscover self-confidence and develop healthier relationships. Communication becomes an essential thing in overcoming conflict in relationships (Lingga, 2024). As social beings, humans need interactions that involve interpersonal communication as a link that facilitates interaction between individuals. Interpersonal communication patterns refer to the form or pattern of communication relationships between two or more people so that the communicating parties can easily understand the message (Naufal, 2022). Interpersonal communication relationships are significant in everyday life because they affect the quality of relationships between individuals and allow for cooperation, mutual support, and achievement of common goals. Everyone plays a crucial role in socializing, starting from the family environment, interactions with peers, and work partners in various social environments..

According to Buhrmester, one of the essential aspects of social skills is self-disclosure or openness (Septiani, 2019). As stated by Lumsden, self-disclosure can help someone communicate with others, increase self-confidence and create closer relationships (Wiyono, 2020). Individuals usually receive poor social acceptance without self-disclosure, which can affect their personality development. Furthermore, Altman and Taylor state that self-disclosure is the ability of someone to express information about themselves to others to achieve a close relationship (Septiani, 2019). Young adulthood is a dynamic stage of development in human life because it determines life in actual adulthood. Young adults also experience changes in thinking, becoming more critical and easily influenced by their surroundings. Humans experiencing the young adult phase tend to seek peer support and experience pressure to follow the norms and values of their environment (Diananda, 2019). Good interpersonal communication is also essential for young adults in establishing healthy and harmonious relationships in their personal lives, such as in family, friendship, and romantic relationships. With good interpersonal communication and support from the right environment, young adults can develop their potential optimally. An open attitude, empathy, support, and equality in communication can create harmonious relationships between individuals (Bidyasari, 2019). However, failure to communicate well can lead to the risk of being in a toxic relationship.

A toxic relationship is a relationship that harms one or both parties, both physically and psychologically. Toxic relationships can occur in various forms, such as between friends, family, or partners. Bad relationships can create an environment that is not conducive to

understanding and supporting each other, thereby increasing the risk of being trapped in a toxic relationship. The perpetrators of toxic relationships can be people closest to the victim, such as immediate family, lovers in an unhealthy love relationship, or peers who often carry out bullying in the form of verbal, physical, and even sexual violence (Praptiningsih, 2021). According to research conducted by Sprecher and Hendrick, self-disclosure has a positive relationship with the quality and stability of a relationship, because self-disclosure can be an act of maintaining a relationship (Dariyo, 2019). Another reason self-disclosure is important in a relationship is that it creates a sense of intimacy for its success. Based on research conducted by Gainau, individuals who can do self-disclosure will be able to express themselves appropriately, are proven to be able to adapt, are more confident, more competent, reliable, more able to be positive, trust others, are more objective, and open (Dariyo, 2019). Conversely, individuals who are less able to do self-disclosure are proven to be unable to adapt, lack self-confidence, have feelings of fear and anxiety, feel inferior, and are closed (Dariyo, 2019).

Toxic relationships impact individual development, especially in creating interpersonal communication skills (Praptiningsih, 2021). Relationships between individuals who experience toxic relationships are prone to causing victims to become unproductive and mentally disturbed and trigger emotional outbursts that lead to violence (Julianto, 2020), especially in young couples; infidelity can cause a lack of self-confidence, venting on negative things, emotional disturbances, deep trauma, becoming victims of bullying, decreased motivation and feeling a lack of affection (Prasidarini, 2024). Infidelity in a toxic marital relationship can worsen the condition of the couple's relationship. Divorce cases in Indonesia 2022 reached 516,334 cases (Annur, 2022). These disputes and quarrels are motivated by several economic factors and injustice. Infidelity can occur for various reasons, including unmet emotional needs, sexual needs, and ignorance about the behavior being carried out. It can be triggered by coincidence, opportunity, and soul ties or done to channel one's fantasies (Lase, 2021).

Rifka Annisa, which means 'Friend of Women', is a non-governmental organization committed to eliminating violence against women. Founded on August 26, 1993, this organization began with the initiative of several women activists, namely Suwarni Angesti Rahayu, Sri Kusyuniati, Latifah Iskandar, Desti Murdijana, Sitoresmi Prabuningrat, and Musrini Daruslan. Rifka Annisa's existence was triggered by deep concern about the tendency towards patriarchal culture, which, on the one hand, strengthens the position of men but, on the other hand, weakens the position of women. As a result, women become vulnerable to violence, be it physical, psychological, economic, social, or sexual violence, such as

harassment and rape. Rifka Annisa believes that violence against women occurs due to various interrelated factors. In dealing with the problem of gender-based violence that arises in society, Rifka Annisa is committed to making various efforts to eliminate violence against women. Cases of violence against wives handled by the Rifka Annisa Foundation during 2018-2022 were more than other cases. Domestic infidelity can be a form of violence against wives. In addition, infidelity can also trigger detrimental behavior such as control, intimidation, and physical violence against wives who feel threatened and insecure in the relationship; problems that arise during marriage are caused by the existence of power, trust, and intimacy in the relationship that triggers infidelity, including financial factors, sex, and communication because it is a daily interaction between husband and wife (Syamsuri, 2020).

Furthermore, developing technology-based communication patterns also opens up challenges in a person's relationship (Shaleha, 2021). In addition, one of the essential things in managing relationships and household happiness is interpersonal communication between couples (Arwan, 2018). This interpersonal communication is closely related to the couple's commitment to maintaining the marriage (Zhafirah, 2020); Dewi said that a healthy interpersonal relationship is a relationship that gives and receives in a balanced way between the two parties (Khairunnisa, 2024). Couples who are not open to each other tend to have affairs. The open attitude of the couple in communicating will build an attitude of mutual support, respect, and understanding. Openness is important in building trust in a relationship (Ristiani, 2021).

Self-disclosure means communicating about ourselves to others. Self-disclosure can also refer to information that will be shared with anyone, for example, about likes and dislikes, what one thinks, or preferences for food, books, or music that one is interested in. Self-disclosure occurs in interpersonal communication because self-disclosure involves at least one other person, so it cannot be an act of intrapersonal communication. To fulfill the requirements for self-disclosure, the information must be received and understood by other people (Devito, 2016). Self-disclosure can also be seen from the perspective of communication psychology. Self-disclosure can increase knowledge about self-concept (Rakhmat, 2023). If self-concept is acquired, a person will be more open to accepting new experiences and ideas, more likely to avoid defensive attitudes, and more carefully view oneself and others. Apart from providing knowledge about self-concept, self-disclosure has a significant influence in fostering effective interpersonal communication. According to Pace, interpersonal communication is a communication process that occurs directly between two or more individuals; the message's sender can convey information directly, and the recipient of the message can immediately receive and respond (Rahmi, 2022). Interpersonal communication

is communication that takes place between two people who have a clear relationship (Angelia, 2021). In interpersonal communication, sending and receiving messages between two people or a small group occurs directly and involves personal contact, thereby creating in-depth communication (Rahmi, 2022).

Interpersonal relationships are significant for personality development because they can help cognitive and social growth through interactions with other people. Through interpersonal relationships, a person can learn about different experiences, values, habits, and lifestyles and share his life experiences and values (Rahmi, 2022). Interpersonal interaction also allows someone to understand the differences and similarities between individuals, which can increase appreciation of human diversity. According to Ngalimun, one of the factors that can foster interpersonal communication is an open attitude (Ngalimun, 2022). An open attitude is critical in building effective interpersonal communication. This attitude encourages mutual understanding and respect and develops the relationship quality because nothing is closed between partners. Even though communicating is a daily habit, it only sometimes produces the results as expected.

Knowledge about oneself will increase through communication with others; communication with others can also increase a person's understanding of himself (Rakhmat, 2023). When someone is willing to open up, their self-concept becomes closer to reality. Suppose the self-concept is based on a person's life experiences. In that case, the person will be more open to accepting new experiences and ideas, be better able to avoid defensive attitudes and be more careful in viewing himself and others (Rakhmat, 2023). The relationship between self-concept and self-disclosure can be explained by the relationship stages theory proposed by Devito, where one of the most evident characteristics of relationships is that relationships occur in stages, moving from initial contact to deeper intimacy and sometimes even shifting to breakdown (dissolution) (Rahkmawati, 2019). For example, when someone first meets another person, they will become friends but go through several stages or processes. All types of relationships in interpersonal communication occur in a series of events or stages of the process. The following model describes six stages in relationship formation in interpersonal communication: contact, involvement, familiarity, breakdown, repair, and termination. Each stage has characteristics and functions in building relationships. Arrows indicate the movement of stages in the development of a relationship.

The concepts of self-disclosure and engagement are interrelated. According to Goffman, human relationships are greatly influenced by meaning and interpretation (Nurdin, 2020). According to Cegala, these two aspects play an essential role in shaping social behavior,

including verbal and non-verbal actions that reflect a person's view of the interaction situation, whether carried out by others or oneself (Nurdin, 2020). The concept of interaction involvement revolves around a person's participation in the social environment. This concept requires individuals to be aware of their thoughts and feelings when receiving messages from other people and to try to predict the meaning of messages conveyed so that communication can occur effectively. According to Goffman, interaction creates reciprocal relationships in the context of society (interaction), occurring when individuals or groups are in a meeting on an ongoing basis (Nurdin, 2020). Based on this concept, interaction involvement becomes a fundamental element in interpersonal communication.

Goffman suggested that interaction involvement is influenced by three interconnected elements: attention, perception, and responsiveness (Nurdin, 2020). Attention is the essential element in interaction involvement because it is directly related to the individual's focus on the source of information, whether auditory or visual when interacting in a social environment. Attention includes carefully listening to others' speech and paying attention to non-verbal cues in social interactions. Goffman observed that some individuals lose focus during social interactions, seem preoccupied with unrelated matters, or focus only on a few aspects of the conversation (Nurdin, 2020). Perception is a person's ability to interpret and combine meanings related to themselves and others. This ability influences communication success because a person's perception of others can form positive or negative perceptions. Negative perceptions of the messenger can result in less effective communication; positive perceptions can increase the effectiveness of communication.

The responsive element related to behavior is the individual's ability to adapt to the social environment where communication occurs. It involves direct involvement in communication, listening and looking carefully, and responding with verbal and non-verbal behavior. Goffman emphasizes that responsiveness is essential in communication events because it involves attention and perception, which is reflected in communication actions (Nurdin, 2020). Apart from that, in establishing relationships, the concept of a toxic relationship is known as a type of relationship between people who are less supportive of each other, thus giving rise to a conflict that can be destructive, reduce respect, and hinder unity (Christy, 2022). This toxic relationship phenomenon is not only limited to relationships between couples but can also occur within friendships and families. According to Christy, a relationship can be said to be toxic when there is destructive, hostile, degrading, and harassing behavior given by one individual to another individual, both verbally and physically (Christy, 2022).

According to Walker, toxic behavior does not occur continuously but occurs in the same cycle. This cycle repeats itself and tends to get worse without any significant change. This cycle begins with tension building, where the behavior of one party perceives their partner as violating the role or commitment of a relationship, thereby triggering conflict and discord in the relationship. Then, it continues with the incident where the perpetrator begins to emit outbursts of anger and violence in physical and verbal form. The cycle ends with the reconciliation/honeymoon phase, where the perpetrator realizes and is ashamed of his actions, so the perpetrator tries to find reasons to defend his actions and be sweet, apologize, and promise. It will avoid repeating the mistake. At this stage, the victim feels that their partner has shown changes for the better. However, the attitude shown by the perpetrator is not permanent, thus triggering conflict and recurring (Adhiatma, 2019).

In interpersonal relationships, infidelity is also known as an act of violating a mutually agreed commitment. Breach of trust depends entirely on the consent of each partner. A partner who feels betrayed or can be called a victim is a person who feels that one partner's loyalty agreement in their relationship has been violated (Spring, 2000). If infidelity occurs, the victim's mind and body will be shocked. Loss of the victim's fundamental sense of order and justice in the world. Also lost is a sense of control over life, self-esteem, and self-concept about who he is (Spring, 2000). In the context of infidelity, lying and deception are important aspects that often occur. As is known, deception theory explains how someone can lie or hide information to maintain their relationship or to cover up the act of infidelity. Lies can occur in verbal and non-verbal communication, which creates tension in the relationship. Eventually, the couple will form a new identity, which is a concept from Social Identity Theory, where individuals form their identity based on certain social groups or relationships. In cases of infidelity, individuals may feel separated or dissatisfied with the identity they have in their relationship and seek external relationships to create or find an identity they value more.

An injured partner experiences several different impacts. They are all variations of one fundamental loss, which is more than losing a partner, namely losing their self. It will be difficult for some people to recognize this impact in any form because none of it is tangible. The impacts that will arise include loss of self-concept when the discovery of a partner's infidelity will force the victim to redefine himself most fundamentally. Victims will always wonder about the truth of the marriage they experienced and the partner who betrayed them. In the past, the victim in the couple described himself as capable, independent, funny, brave, friendly, warm, stable, loving, generous, and attractive. However, when that happens, everything will change. The victims in the couple will identify themselves negatively, such

as jealousy, anger, revenge, uncontrollability, pettiness, discouragement, bitterness, fear, loneliness, physical pain, pollution, ugly, wrong, and other negative things. The victim in the couple loses sight of their usual self and doubts their goodness, desires, and essential ability to negotiate with the world.

The subsequent impact is compulsive behavior, shown by distrust, which causes victims to behave compulsively, without reason, and even refuse to be regulated. This behavior can be characterized by in-depth checking of what the partner is doing, trying to tap into the partner's electronic devices, constant vigilance likely to be physically and mentally exhausting, and excessive exercise or dieting. Apart from that, it can also have the impact of losing communication with other people because the victim's shame and low self-esteem in the couple make them think that everyone is talking about them and avoiding them. The confusion within him causes it; on the one hand, the victim wants to tell everyone that he is being betrayed, but on the other hand, the victim wants to remain silent and alone. Therefore, the victim in the couple will withdraw from the social environment, driven by their pride, fear of ridicule, and an unreasonable sense of responsibility to protect their partner (Spring, 2000).

The novelty of this study from previous research shows that the behavioral perspective of infidelity leads to how victims process interpersonal information related to infidelity. There is a special focus on how individuals manage victims' cognitions and perceptions about their partners, even though there is not always tangible evidence. This study also introduces a new perspective in interpersonal communication regarding metacognition or more conscious communication strategies that can help couples understand and manage anxiety or concerns in the relationship, as well as actions to prevent misunderstandings that can lead to infidelity.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study focuses on self-disclosure in victims of toxic infidelity relationships at the Rifka Annisa Foundation, which includes four stages of relationship development, namely contact, involvement, intimacy, and demoralization, as well as toxic relationships that include three indicators, namely emotional violence, physical violence, sexual violence. Disclosure was obtained through in-depth interviews based on the victim's experience and trying to find out how the victim can adjust communication with their partner after trauma. Interview questions include four stages of relationship development and three indicators. Researchers use qualitative research methods to study the natural situation of an object (Sugiyono, 2021). In this approach, the researcher becomes the primary tool, data is collected through triangulation techniques, data analysis is inductive, and the focus is on understanding and

interpreting meaning, not generalization (Abdussamad, 2021). A qualitative approach is used to describe the facts or reality of an event to obtain objective data (Haryoko, 2020). The qualitative approach in this case study research is considered appropriate because it can understand the context of infidelity as a personal experience that cannot be obtained using quantitative methods. In addition, it can capture the diversity of victim perspectives and mental and emotional processes and understand relational dynamics and verbal and non-verbal communication.

Primary data sources were obtained through interviews with six informants, five of whom are victims of toxic relationships who are members of the Rifka Annisa Foundation and one informant as an expert resource person. Meanwhile, secondary data comes from data collections that support, strengthen, and complement the research, including opinions from counselors who handle cases at the Rifka Annisa Foundation.

Qualitative data analysis was carried out interactively and continued continuously until complete so that the data was saturated, starting from data collection, reduction, presentation, and verification. The researcher used technical triangulation as a data validity method for the validity of the data in this study. Technical triangulation means researchers use different data collection techniques to obtain data from the same source (Sugiyono, 2021). In other words, when researchers collect data through triangulation, the author also collects and verifies the credibility of the data. Technical triangulation is a technique for testing data credibility by checking data against the same source with different techniques. This approach provides a more comprehensive and in-depth perspective on the phenomenon being studied. In the context of this research, triangulation techniques were used, namely interviews, then checked with observation as a data collection technique used from the same source.

DISCUSSION

Based on the study's results, the consistent pattern of decreasing openness and intensity of communication before the affair occurred reflects a significant change in the relationship dynamics. Informant 1 stated the need for a more intense relationship and a lack of detailed discussion in everyday conversations. This increasing emotional distance aligns with the complaints of other informants, such as Informant 2, Informant 3, Informant 4, and Informant 5, all of whom described a change in openness and intensity of communication with their partners. It is like the concept of interpersonal deception theory, where couples only start sending messages that do not contain certain. Often, messages are sent outside the topic

being discussed and there is an effort by the sender to only try to maintain the relationship and image in their communication behavior. Informant 2 felt a significant decrease in openness and intensity of communication, resulting in a lack of depth in everyday interactions. Informant 3 stated a change in the level of openness and intensity of communication with her husband, initially intense but then stopped. Less intense and limited communication also became prominent in the experience of Informant 4.

Meanwhile, Informant 5 experienced a marked decrease in openness and intensity of communication, which emphasized that interactions were more focused on individual matters. A decrease in openness and intensity of communication can indicate disharmony in the relationship, indicating an imbalance and shift in the couple's dynamics. A decrease in openness can create an emotional gap and increase the risk of conflict, even injustice. Therefore, understanding changes in this pattern is very important to detect problems early and take appropriate preventive measures. Early detection can help couples find solutions, such as engaging in counseling or therapeutic communication, to improve their relationship before the conflict becomes more complex. Expert informants in this study stated that the essence of openness in building a solid relationship can be formed through positive contact, reflected in an open attitude to accept partners with all their uniqueness and backgrounds. This openness is about accepting strengths and a willingness to understand weaknesses and differences. Expert informants emphasized the importance of connecting emotions with partners by placing openness as a key element, creating a solid foundation for building intimacy and trust in a relationship. Through this view, openness is considered the central pillar that forms the basis of positive interaction between partners, which is important for understanding the dynamics of interpersonal relationships in more depth. When the relationship enters the interactional contact stage, communication between partners becomes shallower and more essential.

Greetings or conversations that were initially formal and minimal in detail, as experienced by Informant 1, Informant 2, Informant 3, Informant 4, and Informant 5, reflect this stage. This process can be interpreted as an inability to reach a deeper contact stage when communication is more personal and detailed. Thus, a decrease in openness and intensity of communication before an affair may indicate an imbalance in the contact stage. Changes in perception and interaction indicate a shift in the relationship dynamics, which, if not handled properly, can open the door to further conflict, even injustice. Therefore, understanding and awareness of these contact stages are fundamental in detecting changes in the relationship and taking appropriate preventive measures to strengthen the foundation

of the relationship before the conflict becomes more complex. As mentioned in previous studies, poor communication precedes an affair.

At the involvement stage, informants who revealed their partner's infidelity showed various responses and actions that reflected different levels of involvement in dealing with the conflict. Informant 1 showed high involvement with a proactive response. Steps such as communicating openly with their partner and visiting the Rifka Annisa Foundation together reflected mature and wise decisions in resolving the problem,

"After finding out about my husband's infidelity from the message I received, I immediately communicated with my husband to find a solution. Together, we went to the Rifka Annisa Foundation to get mediation and psychological assistance to resolve this problem".

These actions show commitment to handling cases of injustice and improving the relationship, emphasizing the importance of long-term solutions and professional support. On the other hand, Informant 2 also showed significant involvement by immediately seeking psychological support from the Rifka Annisa Foundation after finding out about her husband's infidelity. Her confused and resigned response reflects the profound emotional impact, and the concrete steps to seek professional help indicate an awareness of the need for support and guidance in dealing with this challenging situation,

"When I found out about my husband's affair while I was pregnant, I felt confused and resigned. Immediately, I asked for help from the Rifka Annisa Foundation to get psychological support. The confusing and emotional situation required professional help to accompany me through this difficult time".

This involvement reflects the individual's efforts to overcome the psychological impact of the conflict in their relationship. Other informants also showed different levels of involvement in dealing with injustice. Informant 3 focused on open communication and efforts to repair the relationship through dialogue, reflecting involvement in rebuilding trust and emotional bonds,

"I found out about my husband's affair through his cellphone because of suspicious changes in behavior. I immediately discussed it with my husband, who then apologized and promised not to repeat the mistake".

Open communication is the first step, and we hope to improve our relationship. Meanwhile, Informant 4, who faced a dilemma when his wife cheated while pregnant, showed involvement based on considerations of the safety of his wife and fetus, so he chose to reprimand her without taking further action, “

When I found out about my wife’s affair via chat with another man while pregnant, I felt confused and did not know how to act. I decided to reprimand her without taking further action because the pregnancy situation did not allow for intense confrontation”.

Informant 5, with an investigative approach through hiring a detective, showed involvement in uncovering the truth and opening an open dialogue with her partner,

“I found out about my husband’s affair through evidence found by the detective I hired. I waited for my husband to come home from work to show the evidence as a confrontation. I wanted to open an open discussion about this incident”.

According to expert sources, involvement in dealing with partner infidelity can be reflected in the individual’s attitude in seeking solutions and understanding the root of the problem, emphasizing the importance of active involvement in uncovering the causes and signs of infidelity so that individuals can understand more deeply the dynamics of their relationship with their partner. According to expert sources, this kind of involvement is about seeking the truth and building a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship. Therefore, individual involvement in dealing with infidelity is not only a response to conflict but also an effort to improve and strengthen the relationship,

“Self-openness is an attitude of acceptance. Openness means being open to accepting other people as they are. With their uniqueness, with their various backgrounds, so too. Besides opening himself up to accept, he also opens himself up so that other people can know who he is. We open ourselves up; other people know who we are. In this case, if the context is in a couple, ready to accept whatever the advantages and disadvantages of the partner. So is the partner. That is why in a relationship, self-openness is important. Because there will be honesty, trust will emerge when people are honest and feel comfortable. That is one thing that is very important in a relationship”.

The engagement stage indicates a sense of togetherness among the relationship participants. Informant 1 showed high engagement with proactive steps, such as communicating openly with the partner and seeking professional support. These actions reflect efforts to improve the relationship and demonstrate an awareness of the importance

of long-term solutions. Informant 2 also showed a significant level of engagement by seeking psychological support after learning about her husband's affair. The disorganized and resigned response reflects the profound emotional impact, which creates a need for support and guidance in dealing with the problematic situation.

Meanwhile, despite facing different levels of engagement, Informants 3, 4, and 5 showed efforts to understand and improve the relationship through open communication. These actions reflect the level of engagement in rebuilding trust and emotional bonds. Expert informants emphasized the importance of active engagement in uncovering the causes and signs of infidelity, creating a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship. By the engagement stage, relationship participants engage in more open conversations and experiments to strengthen the relationship. Based on the analysis of why some victims prefer to stay rather than separate,

1. Love and emotional bonds, so that couples decide to give a second chance.
2. Children and family are important things to consider, where pregnancy and couples feel that children need both parents to avoid the negative impacts of divorce.
3. The desire to fix and understand the problem makes couples want to work together to fix the relationship. They may feel that infidelity is a sign of a problem that must be resolved, not the end of everything.
4. A sense of responsibility is when couples feel that the relationship is worth maintaining and that the effort to fix the relationship is more important than the feelings of anger or disappointment that arise.
5. The desire to forgive arises, and he believes the person who cheated can change if given the chance.
6. Lack of other options, where couples feel that separating will bring more uncertainty or difficulty, and staying in the relationship can feel safer despite the pain.
7. Long-term commitment, as seen from research informants, is seen in their relationship as a long-term commitment, and they feel that it needs to be maintained despite significant trials.

Overall, handling the affair case reflects a complex engagement stage. The informants were involved in various steps, which created a relationship dynamic that deepened according to the engagement stage. The two levels in this stage, testing, and intensification, are reflected in efforts to find common ground and deepen testing of opinions with others.

Based on the description, communication in interpersonal relationships plays a central role in overcoming infidelity. Based on the interpersonal communication theory approach, couples must communicate openly, honestly, and empathetically to understand each other, rebuild trust, and establish steps to improve the relationship. This process requires a willingness to listen, forgive, and work together to repair the relationship.

According to expert informants, self-disclosure is not just an aspect of acceptance but also plays a role in strengthening intimacy in a relationship. Opening up to a partner creates an environment that supports feelings of comfort and openness so that both parties can understand each other more deeply. In line with the views of expert informants, this understanding has positive consequences, such as creating honesty and strengthening trust between partners. The informants' responses to their partner's infidelity show the complex dynamics of efforts to repair the relationship.

Informant 1 showed concrete efforts by engaging in counseling sessions and trying to improve communication. However, this improvement was only temporary because her partner cheated again. The decision to separate shows that despite repair efforts, broken trust can be a significant obstacle in restoring the relationship. It shows that temporary improvements do not always lead to a healthy recovery, and deciding to stay or separate may depend on the concrete circumstances that develop after the efforts. Informant 3 showed signs of improvement in dealing with post-infidelity conflict.

Reflecting on oneself and finding solutions is an excellent first step in repairing a relationship. However, despite improvement, all efforts did not show any change in their partner's attitude. Based on this, Informant 3 tried to separate after her child was baptized. It shows that repairing relationships requires time and ongoing effort, and the decision to end the relationship shows that the drive to build trust and openness needs to be improved. Informant 5 initially tried to open more open communication after the affair. Although there have been positive steps in discussing the problem, the repair process is still in its early stages and has not resulted in significant changes in the relationship. The decision to stay shows a desire to repair the relationship, although there is still silence and an inability to face the conflict openly. It shows that repairing the relationship requires more effort and time, and continuing to make these efforts will determine how their relationship develops.

Efforts to repair the relationship, as expressed by expert informants, show a desire to find a joint solution in dealing with the conflict. However, the expected repair still needs to be achieved because four out of five informants decided to separate. This decision illustrates the complexity of relationship dynamics, the challenges faced in the repair process, and the communication strategies that are considered unsuccessful. Reconciliation can occur if both

parties are willing to try to repair the relationship and are committed to supporting each other. However, in some cases, reconciliation is not the best option because the affair has led to irreparable mistrust and has even damaged the existing relationship.

From the perspective of Knapp's relationship stage theory (Rahkmawati, 2019), the decision to repair or end a relationship is a choice faced in the weakening stage of the bond. As expressed by the informants, the complex dynamics of relationship repair reflect the stages in the relationship change process, such as differentiating, limiting, stalling, avoiding, and ending. Although the informants want repair, the decision to separate is a reality some people face. These arguments reveal the importance of understanding that repairing relationships does not always work and that deciding to end a relationship is necessary for psychological and emotional well-being.

The couples in this study experienced a decline phase, starting from avoiding their partners, showing more incompatibilities, and starting to withdraw from each other. Finally, communication and joint activities were marked by increasingly limited topics of conversation, and individuals started to avoid deeper or more intimate conversations. Until the stagnation phase, when the relationship begins to feel stagnant and there is no significant growth or change, communication becomes more formal. In couples in the avoidance phase, conflicts are not resolved and even tend to be avoided until they end in divorce.

In the context of the problem of infidelity revealed by the informants, Goffman's Interactional Engagement theory is an approach that attention, as one of the important elements in interactive involvement, can be reflected in how informants pay attention to the condition of their relationship after the affair. In repairing relationships, attention to partners, open communication, and understanding of the situation are significant. It reflects the individual's focus on the source of information, in this case, the couple's relationship. Attention is also an important element in interactive involvement because it is directly related to the individual's focus on the source of information, both in the form of auditory and visual information, when interacting in a social environment. Perception is a person's ability to interpret and combine meanings related to themselves and others. This ability influences communication success because a person's perception of others can form positive or negative perceptions (Nurdin, 2020).

Perception, as the ability to interpret and combine related meanings, can also be associated with the informant's response and actions to injustice. The existence of perception provides an assessment of how informants view their partner's actions, whether as a mistake that can be corrected or a sign of relationship failure, which influences the next steps. This

perception can also influence the success or failure of communication, which is an important element in repair efforts. Responsiveness, as the third element in interactive engagement, emerges through the steps taken by the informants to resolve the conflict and repair the relationship. Whether they give a second chance, seek professional help, or even decide to separate, all reflect the response to the situation. It also shows that interaction engagement is closely related to the relationship dynamics and how individuals respond to the events that occur in the interaction.

Thus, Goffman's theory of Interaction Engagement can help understand how attention, perception, and responsiveness play an important role in relationship dynamics, especially when facing conflict situations such as infidelity based on research results and information from informants. However, the concept put forward by Goffman in the interview results in this study showed a pattern of communication that failed to maintain a relationship. Some practical suggestions that can be given based on the results of the study include open communication with your partner, which can provide a little peace. Then, create space for honest and non-judgmental discussions to help create a more constructive dialogue and not worsen the situation. In this aspect, evaluating the relationship and considering counseling with an expert or a foundation such as Rifka Annisa is necessary.

Based on the stages of contact, involvement, intimacy, and decline described, contact is the initial stage in a relationship, where two people first interact. Then comes the involvement stage, which refers to the stage where two people become more involved in the relationship, communicate more frequently, and perhaps share more personal information or feelings. The next stage is intimacy, where the relationship reaches a higher emotional depth. At this stage, individuals share more profound and personal feelings, desires, and needs. Then comes the final stage, decline, which is when the relationship begins to decline or break down. It can happen for various reasons, such as unresolved conflict, poor communication, or lack of attention and care for the relationship. The following is a scheme for each stage experienced by each informant in the study:

Table 1. Scheme Of Each Stage Experienced By Each Informant

| Informant | Contact | Involvement | Intimacy | Deterioration |
|------------------|---|---|--|---|
| 1 | Relationships feel less intense, and essential topics in everyday conversation are neglected. And it has already started emotional abuse occurs | Communicate openly, then go to the Rifka Annisa Foundation for mediation and psychological assistance | Giving an open response and giving her husband a second chance | Divorce |
| 2 | Restrictions in communication result in a lack of depth of interaction, and essential issues previously discussed openly begin to be ignored | The concrete step was to ask for help from the Rifka Annisa Foundation to get psychological support | The informant's response shows a commitment to focus on the emotional well-being of herself and her children | Divorce |
| 3 | There is a decrease in openness, and the intensity of communication with her partner decreases | The informant responded to her husband's infidelity by focusing on open communication. Realizing the suspicious change in her husband's behavior, she initiated a direct discussion | The informants showed a relatively open response to their partner's infidelity | Survive but commit to divorce after the child is baptized |
| 4 | The informant described his relationship with his wife as good; however, several months before the affair, his wife often left without telling him or asking permission and often came home late at night | After learning about his wife's infidelity, the informant decided to reprimand her without going any further | When realizing the affair, the informant showed a willingness to give himself time and space to reflect | Divorce |
| 5 | There is change significant in the level of openness and intensity of communication before infidelity | The informant responded to his partner's infidelity with an open and honest approach | The informant strongly desired to uncover the truth and openly discussed it with his partner | Improve relationships |

Source: Researcher, 2025

1. At the contact stage, the informant's communication pattern tends to be more formal and slightly more guarded, focusing on introductions and small talk. The informant applies an interpersonal communication pattern with the partner at this stage based on general social rules and not in-depth.
2. Informant communication at the involvement stage becomes more open and involves deeper conversations. The conversation is no longer just about surface facts but begins to include personal feelings and views. There is an effort to rebuild trust in each other. However, this study found that the Rifka Annisa Foundation has an important role.
3. Couple communication at the intimacy stage leads to the stage where the relationship reaches emotional depth, begins to forgive each other and give second chances, and builds trust even though there are elements of fear, doubt, desire, and hope. There is less hiding or lying, and communication is more direct and empathetic.
4. Communication at the deterioration stage has proven ineffective because the couple avoids or is silent in conversation. When communication occurs, it may be more often in the form of conflict or criticism. The inability to resolve differences constructively ultimately ends the relationship.

Indeed, in many relationships, the communication patterns built are not always effective and can be the leading cause of separation. Poor communication can trigger unresolved conflicts, create emotional distance, or even cause misunderstandings that ultimately damage the relationship. In this study, it was found that passive communication forms in couples as an effort to avoid confrontation and not express their feelings and needs clearly. They tend to agree on things to keep the peace, which can lead to accumulated frustration because their feelings and needs are unmet. The couples in this study seemed too focused on the problem even though there were efforts to find solutions or improve the situation. Couples continued to repeat complaints and criticisms without trying to improve the situation until they were trapped in an unproductive circle. Hopelessness and emotional exhaustion can lead to feelings that there is no way out of the problem, which ultimately triggers separation.

CONCLUSION

Self-disclosure is a key element in the early stages of a relationship that builds trust and a deep emotional connection between partners. In a healthy relationship, self-disclosure helps strengthen bonds and facilitates open communication. However, a decrease in openness

and intensity of communication in a relationship can indicate changing dynamics, often leading to conflict or even infidelity. The response to infidelity reflects the level of engagement and openness of the couple in addressing the issues that arise. Some try to be proactive in repairing the relationship through better communication or couples counseling, while others focus more on emotional recovery and personal well-being.

The study found that self-disclosure is not only important in personal interactions between partners but is also closely related to the ability to cope with crises in the relationship, such as infidelity. One of the main findings is the importance of healthy communication, such as couples therapy and psychological counseling, in overcoming the negative impacts of infidelity. Furthermore, in a toxic relationship, opening up to seek external support, such as through the Rifka Annisa Foundation, serves as a positive step to dealing with conflict and supporting psychological recovery.

Future research could further explore factors that influence self-disclosure in relationships, including the role of culture, individual background, and socioeconomic factors that may influence couples' emotional disclosure. Additionally, further research could examine the long-term impact of couples therapy and external support on post-infidelity relationship quality, as well as how different recovery approaches play a role in restoring trust and emotional bonds. This research could also expand the study of gender differences in self-disclosure and how it influences responses to conflict in relationships. Thus, self-disclosure, open communication, and seeking professional support are important in resolving conflict and avoiding relationship breakdown.

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