

Analysis Of Toxic Parents And Authoritarian Family Dynamics Among Generation Z Students: A Qualitative Single Case Study

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Abstract. Toxic parents is a term that refers to a parenting pattern that damages a child's psychological development, characterized by excessive control, emotional neglect, verbal abuse, and mental manipulation. This phenomenon is becoming increasingly relevant in the context of Generation Z, which is known to be more open to mental health issues but also more vulnerable to family pressure. This study aims to analyze the forms of toxic parent behavior and their impact on Generation Z students. This study uses a qualitative descriptive research method, with one research subject as the primary data source and secondary data sources using supporting informants from people closest to the respondents. The data collection methods in this study are observation, interviews and documentation. The steps for qualitative descriptive data analysis involve three stages, namely data reduction, data display and drawing conclusions. Then after the data is analyzed, it is continued with the Data Validity Test. The data validity test in this study uses a triangulation model.

Keywords: Toxic Parents, Generation Z, Students

A. INTRODUCTION

Students can be said to be part of a youth group, which according to Law Number 40 of 2009, includes individuals between the ages of 16 and 30. In this age range, students are in a developmental phase that includes the late adolescence and early adulthood stages. Late adolescence, which lasts between the ages of 16 and 20, is the period in which individuals begin to establish adulthood, while the early adulthood stage, which begins around the age of 20 to early 30s, marks a

phase of transition to more stable adulthood, both in terms of identity, social roles, and responsibilities.

The process of forming a student's identity is a complex journey, influenced by various factors, including interaction with the social environment, individual experiences, and relationships with educational institutions. In this context, the lecture period is a crucial transition period in a person's life, where students begin to build and develop a more solid and mature self-identity. During this process, they explore personal values, adapt to a new environment, and make decisions that reflect their commitment to their social and academic roles. The process does not focus on the search for identity, but on the development of social and academic skills that will shape a more mature and responsible person (Diemas Arya Komara, 2024).

Students from Generation Z are individuals born between the late 1990s and early 2010s. They are developing in the midst of the rapid progress of the digital era, so they have different characteristics compared to previous generations. This generation tends to be more open in discussing mental health issues, more proficient in the use of technology, and has very wide access to information.

The main characteristics of Generation Z include high digital skills, an independent and innovative attitude in solving problems, and high social awareness of environmental issues and social justice. While they tend to be independent, Gen Z also values collaboration and connection with others, both in person and through digital platforms. Additionally, they prefer visual and interactive content, such as videos and infographics.

The characteristics of Generation Z specifically their close relationship with technology and social media influence how individuals acquire information, build social connections, and interpret their family experiences. In the context of this study, these characteristics are relevant to experiences of toxic parenting, as

participants have access to various sources of information and social support outside the family. This access can shape how participants recognize, understand, and respond to the toxic parenting behaviors they experience. Thus, the characteristics of Gen Z serve as a context for understanding the experience of toxic parenting. (Alfaruqy & Sari, 2023)

Toxic parents are parenting styles that have a very negative impact on children's psychological development. Parents with this parenting style often show behaviors such as excessive criticism, emotional manipulation, lack of empathy, and verbal and physical violence. As a result, children do not get a safe and loving environment, making it difficult to build confidence, self-esteem, and emotional stability.

Some of the characteristics of toxic parents include parents who are ignorant of the direction or goals of the child, often compare the child with others, and trigger trauma. In addition, they also tend to give too high expectations of children's achievements, are selfish, lack affection, like to control, demonize children, blame children for many things, do not appreciate children's efforts, and often make children feel guilty. The impact of this behavior is very large, for example, making children less independent, easily feeling guilty, lowering confidence, feeling useless, feeling unloved, feeling alone, often overwhelmed with guilt, unstable emotions, easily stressed, irritable, and pessimistic about their future.

There are several types of toxic parents according to Dunham and Dermer (Chairunnisa, 2021). First, Pageant Parent, which is parents who force children to obey their will under the assumption that children's success means their success, so that children are pressured to obey all parental wishes. Second, Dismissive Parent, which is parents who underestimate their children and feel that their children cannot survive without them, so that the emotional relationship with the child becomes less warm. Third, Contemptuous Parent, namely parents who often

insult, belittle, and even curse children, while still having high expectations for their children. From this description, it can be concluded that toxic parents usually like to force, underestimate, compare, or insult children, which has bad consequences for children's mental and emotional development.

Authoritarian family dynamics are characterized by strong parental control, strict rules, high expectations, emphasis on obedience, limited autonomy in decision-making, and restricted communication between parents and children. Parents tend to dominate important decisions and provide limited opportunities for discussion or negotiation. These dynamics may influence young adults' autonomy, self-confidence, and openness in expressing personal feelings and problems (Herwandi Putri And Satwika, 2023).

The emergence of toxic parental behavior is usually caused by several factors, one of which is the parent's own family environment in the past, which shaped their parenting to be unhealthy. For example, parents who demand that their children follow the standards of the surrounding environment, or who often compare children so that they make children imitate the habit of comparing themselves with others. In addition, negative experiences in the past can also affect their character when parenting. Often toxic patterns arise because their parents previously received bad treatment and had difficulty controlling it, and sometimes the negative behavior is carried out unconsciously.

Toxic behaviors such as manipulative, inconsistent, underestimating, and suppressing children have the potential to cause mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, and even PTSD. Children who grow up in an atmosphere full of emotional stress are also more prone to long-term trauma. In addition, economic factors also affect toxic behavior in the elderly. Economic demands make them work harder and experience stress, which ultimately impacts the way children are treated. It is not uncommon for children to be blamed or used as an outlet for frustration, for example by comparing children with others,

underestimating the achievements of children who are considered incapable of helping the family economy, or demanding children to support family finances. This makes children lose confidence and find it difficult to focus on pursuing their own goals.

Toxic parenting behavior consists of a number of core elements that directly form unhealthy parenting in the family. According to (Kurniati et al., 2023) One of the main elements is overcontrol, where parents dominate every aspect of a child's life, from educational choices, associations, to other personal decisions. Children are not given space to develop independence or responsibility for their lives. Another element is emotional manipulation, which is the use of feelings of guilt or debt as a tool to control children's behavior. Sentences such as "Mama has sacrificed everything for you" are a clear example of this manipulation, which unconsciously pressures children to always obey their parents' wishes. In addition, excessive criticism and verbal abuse are also destructive elements. Down-to-earth speech, such as comparing a child to others or calling a child useless, has a detrimental effect on a child's self-esteem and self-confidence. Emotional neglect is an element that often goes unrecognized; This occurs when a parent is emotionally absent when the child is struggling or needs support. Children who experience this grow up feeling unloved or worthless. Finally, elements such as the destruction of privacy also often arise, where parents violate the child's personal boundaries without a healthy explanation, such as checking the phone, opening a diary, or imposing control over the child's friends and social environment (Rianti & Ahmad Dahlan, 2022).

Toxic parenting can be seen from various aspects that show a wide impact on children's development. Psychologically, children tend to experience depression, anxiety, identity disorders, and trauma, often as a result of parental parenting that also harbors psychological wounds. In the social aspect, children have difficulty interacting in a healthy way, can become overly obedient or

otherwise aggressive. The emotional aspect includes the inability to manage emotions due to a lack of validation from parents. Meanwhile, in the moral and identity aspects, children experience a value crisis because they are not given the space to recognize themselves. In the field of education and career, children are often pressured by the will of their parents that do not match their interests, thus having an impact on motivation and life satisfaction (Muyasaroh, 2024).

Toxic parenting behavior refers to parenting patterns that consistently damage children's emotional and psychological well-being. This pattern is characterized by emotional manipulation, excessive control, destructive criticism, and neglect of children's affective needs. Over time, exposure to these parenting patterns can have a significant long-term impact on a child's personality development and social functioning, especially as they enter adolescence and young adulthood.

One of the main impacts of toxic parenting behavior is the increased risk of mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress. Longitudinal study by (Brown et al., 1987) It was found that negative parenting experiences in childhood contribute strongly to the emergence of depressive disorders in adulthood, especially when children feel emotionally insecure or often verbally and verbally abusive.

In addition, toxic parenting also plays a role in the formation of dysfunctional social relationship patterns. Children who grow up in an unhealthy family environment tend to have difficulty forming stable interpersonal relationships due to high anxiety about rejection and betrayal. Destructive parenting models are strongly related to increased anxiety in romantic relationships and reduced ability to build trust in others.

Another significant impact is low self-esteem. Children who are constantly criticized or compared by parents will internalize the narrative that they are worthless or not good enough. Parent-child relationships can significantly affect

the development of self-esteem in adolescence, which in turn affects emotional stability and self-identity in adulthood.

Not only that, children of toxic parents are also more susceptible to deviant behavior. Unchanneled emotional tension is often expressed in the form of juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, or aggressive behavior. Finally, toxic parents also hinder the development of independence in decision-making. Parents who control or underestimate their child's abilities can foster a sense of dependence and self-doubt.

There are several strategies to deal with toxic parents with a more positive attitude, and strategies to manage the impact of the relationship between parents and students who experience toxic parents. Research on parenting styles among university students in Indonesia has demonstrated that authoritarian parenting is linked to various aspects of students' lives. For instance, (Reynata And Zahro, 2024) found that Generation Z students subjected to authoritarian parenting tend to feel constrained and lack self-confidence in their social lives. Studies by (Fadilla And Nurudin, 2024) also indicate that authoritarian parenting can limit open communication between students and their parents, particularly regarding the expression of feelings and personal issues. Furthermore, research in Indonesia regarding "toxic parents" has revealed a connection between experiences of toxic parenting and the mental health of adolescents. Other studies have identified verbal hostility, physical punishment, punitive strategies, and direct demands as characteristics reflecting authoritarian parenting.

However, existing research has largely focused on examining the relationship between parenting styles and specific variables—such as social behavior, mental health, communication, or psychological well-being. There is limited qualitative research that deeply explores how Generation Z students experience, interpret, and respond to toxic parenting within authoritarian family dynamics. Moreover, toxic parenting and authoritarian parenting are generally

discussed as separate concepts; consequently, there has been little integrated analysis of students' experiences regarding the forms of control, criticism, demands, restrictions, and communication patterns within their families.

Addressing this gap, this study focuses on the experiences of Generation Z students dealing with toxic parents and authoritarian family dynamics, employing a qualitative case study approach. The study's novelty lies in its integration of the perspectives of toxic parenting and authoritarian family dynamics to understand students' subjective experiences—including the specific parental behaviors encountered, the students' interpretations of these behaviors, and their responses to the family dynamics. Thus, this research goes beyond merely examining the impact of parenting styles; it delves into how toxic parenting and authoritarian family dynamics unfold and are perceived by Generation Z students in their daily lives. Based on the foregoing, this study aims to analyze the experiences of Generation Z students in dealing with toxic parenting and authoritarian family dynamics.

B. LANDASAN THEORY

Toxic Parents

Toxic parenting refers to parenting patterns that consistently hurt emotionally, undermine psychological stability, and inhibit the growth of a child's personality. Parents who have toxic traits usually show a dominant, manipulative, irrational demands, and lack empathy in responding to their children's needs (Laelasari, 2020). They tend not to distinguish between affection and absolute control, and consider the child as an extension of their ego. According to Forward (2009), toxic parenting is a pattern of behavior shown by parents and has a negative impact on children's mental and emotional well-being, and often occurs without the parents themselves realizing it. This parenting pattern not only damages the relationship between parents and children, but also significantly hinders the child's psychological development. Some of the main characteristics

of toxic parenting behavior include: Tendency to Overcontrolling, in this indicator, parents show too dominant attitudes in children's lives, including in daily decision-making. They strictly regulate various aspects—from academic and social choices, to children's personal preferences—which ultimately reduce the space for individual freedom and autonomy of children.

Disproportionate and Persistent Criticism, parents often throw criticism excessively without being balanced with emotional support or constructive appreciation. This condition creates insecurity in children and weakens their confidence. Children tend to feel never good enough in the eyes of their parents, despite their best efforts. Violence or Threats on this indicator, parents use physical violence or threats as a way to control/educate their child. This can be related to the mental health of the child.

Generation Z Students

Generation Z students are those born in the late 1990s to early 2010s. They grew up in a very dynamic and fast digital era, so they have different characteristics compared to previous generations. This generation is known to be more open about mental health, more familiar with technology, and has extensive access to information.

However, students from Generation Z also face challenges that are not light. Many of them experience emotional distress due to high social and family demands. If the relationship with parents is unhealthy or even tends to be toxic, then individuals from this generation are at risk of experiencing more serious psychological disorders because their openness to emotions also makes them more vulnerable to intrapersonal conflicts.

The Psychological Impact of Toxic Parents' Behavior on Students

The relationship between parents and children affects the formation of self-concept and emotional stability of a person. When students have the experience of growing up in a family with toxic patterns, they are more likely to face chronic

emotional distress. Experiences such as constant blame, over-controlled, or lack of emotional support can hinder personality development and disrupt students' mental balance.

Various studies show that students with a background of poor family relationships are more at risk of experiencing anxiety, self-esteem disorders, difficulty establishing interpersonal relationships, and even showing mild to moderate symptoms of depression. They also often have difficulty making decisions independently and forming stable confidence.

C. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach utilizing a single case study design. This design was selected because the research focuses on an in-depth exploration of an individual's experience regarding the phenomena of toxic parenting and authoritarian family dynamics within Generation Z. A qualitative approach enables the researcher to holistically understand the participant's experiences, perceptions, meanings, and responses within their natural life context. Sneed et al. (2020) explain that the case study is a qualitative approach used to explore a specific case in depth within a particular context. Mtisi (2022) further emphasizes that case study research requires clearly defined case boundaries and units of analysis, and may utilize interviews, observations, documentation, and triangulation to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the case.

The single-case study design was adopted because the research focuses on a single case examined in depth through multiple data sources, thereby providing a comprehensive picture of the participant's experience with toxic parenting. Răbu and Binder (2025) explain that a qualitative single-case study can provide detailed insight into an individual's experiences and developmental processes within a specific context, while allowing the researcher to integrate diverse perspectives and information sources.

The study was conducted at University Pancasakti Tegal between March and July 2025. The primary participant was a female Generation Z university student who had experienced toxic parenting patterns within her family environment. Participant selection was carried out using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) belonging to the Generation Z cohort; (2) currently enrolled as a university student; (3) having experienced parenting patterns characterized by toxic parenting and authoritarian styles; (4) being able to articulate her experiences and circumstances; and (5) being willing to participate in the study. A single participant was selected because the study aimed to gain an in-depth, contextual understanding of a specific case, rather than to generalize findings to the entire Generation Z population. The study also involved a supporting informant—a close friend of the participant—who was familiar with the participant's daily life circumstances and experiences. The identities of both the participant and the informant were masked to ensure confidentiality.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation. Two in-depth interviews were held with the primary participant, each lasting approximately 45–60 minutes. The first interview focused on exploring the participant's experiences regarding parental upbringing, forms of "toxic parenting" behavior, parental control, family communication, and associated emotional experiences. The second interview served to deepen the information obtained in the first session, clarify ambiguous points, and explore the participant's responses to and coping mechanisms regarding these family dynamics. Interviews were also conducted with two supporting informants—the participant's close friend and biological older sibling—to gather additional information regarding the participant's condition and observed behavioral changes. A semi-structured interview guide was used to ensure questions remained aligned with the research focus while allowing the researcher flexibility to develop follow-up questions based on the participant's responses. Interviews

were recorded with the participant's consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Observations were conducted to gain insight into the participant's behavior, emotional expressions, and responses throughout the research process. Non-participatory observation methods were employed, with relevant behaviors and situations recorded in field notes. Documentation served as supplementary data, comprising field notes and other research-relevant documents. Data collection was carried out directly by the researcher, who acted as the primary instrument throughout the processes of interviewing, observation, documentation, and data interpretation. The research procedure was conducted in several stages: identifying and selecting participants based on established criteria; explaining the research objectives and procedures; conducting interviews and observations; gathering documentation; interviewing supporting informants; and analyzing and interpreting the data. The two interview sessions with the primary participants were carried out in stages to allow the researcher to delve deeper into and clarify information obtained during the previous session.

Data analysis was conducted through the stages of transcription, data reduction, coding, categorization, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Interview results were transcribed verbatim and reviewed repeatedly to identify information relevant to the research focus. Subsequently, the researcher coded data regarding forms of toxic parenting, authoritarian parental behavior, participants' emotional experiences, family communication dynamics, and participants' responses to these experiences. Codes sharing similarities were then grouped into categories and themes. The analysis results are presented narratively to illustrate the relationships between themes and provide a comprehensive understanding of the cases under study.

Data trustworthiness was established through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information

obtained from primary participants with information from close friends serving as supporting informants. Technique triangulation involved comparing results from interviews, observations, and documentation. Information from the first and second interviews was also compared to assess consistency and clarify incomplete details. In instances where discrepancies arose, the researcher sought further clarification from the data sources to understand the context of the differences. Thus, the use of diverse data sources and collection techniques served to enhance the credibility of the research findings regarding experiences of toxic parenting and authoritarian family dynamics among Generation Z.

D. RESEARCH RESULTS

Toxic Parents

The type of toxic parents experienced by the respondent is that the respondent experiences toxic parents Dismissive and Contemptuous behavior. This is characterized by neglect of the emotional needs of children. Parents tend not to provide empathy, even when the child shows fatigue or pressure, instead comparing the child's struggle with the parents' own experience and degrading and verbally humiliating the child. Respondents often receive negative labels such as "stupid," and experience unhealthy comparisons with other people's siblings or children, leading to self-esteem damage. "I complained that I felt tired because of the lecture activities, but his mother responded by downplaying his complaints and comparing them to his own struggle to earn a living" (Quote from INA Interview)

This is also supported by secondary data, namely close friends of respondents who say that respondents are often ignored, even when they are in desperate need of a place to tell stories. This shows that the emotional needs of respondents are often ignored by their parents, and respondents often experience physical violence and verbal words by their parents, because respondents often experience anxiety and lack of confidence due to their parents' toxic behavior.

Toxic Parents Behavioral Factors

The main factors behind toxic parenting in the respondent's family are closely related to the past life experience of both parents. The respondent's father is known to grow up in an environment full of limitations, especially from the economic aspect. These harsh life experiences form the character of a father who is firm, rigid, and demands his children to become tough individuals and not give up easily. This mindset carries over into parenting practices, where high expectations of their children are not accompanied by adequate emotional understanding.

On the other hand, despite coming from a more financially prosperous family background, the respondent's mother actually faced heavy psychological pressure as the sole breadwinner after her husband stopped working. This condition puts the mother in a very demanding situation both physically and mentally. This burden often causes emotional outbursts that are then vented to children, especially to respondents.

In addition, the difference in background between the two parents creates disharmony in communication patterns and parenting approaches. The mother, who is known to be a perfectionist and has a high need for social recognition, often applies standards that are difficult for children to achieve. Emotional pressure that is not channeled in a healthy way, coupled with a tendency to depression and emotional instability, makes their parenting patterns tend to be harsh, lack of affection, and not empathetic to the psychological needs of children.

The participant's account suggests that the unhealthy parenting experienced within the family was associated with several interrelated circumstances, including the parents' childhood experiences, an imbalance in gender roles within the family, economic pressure, and the parents' strong expectations regarding achievement and perfection. From the participant's perspective, these circumstances appeared to shape the way the parents

responded to family responsibilities and interacted with the participant. However, these factors cannot be interpreted as direct causes of the unhealthy parenting pattern because the data were obtained primarily from the participant's account and did not include direct accounts from the parents. Instead, they are interpreted as contextual factors that may help explain how the participant understood the development and persistence of the family dynamics.

The participant further described the family environment as less emotionally supportive and characterized by recurring conflict and psychological pressure. These experiences were perceived by the participant as having negative implications for emotional well-being. Thus, the findings suggest that the combination of family circumstances and parenting behaviors was experienced as an interconnected pattern rather than as a single causal factor. This interpretation is consistent with the qualitative nature of the study, which emphasizes understanding the participant's subjective experience and the context in which the family dynamics occurred rather than establishing causal relationships among the identified factors. "The toxic behavior of my parents, especially his mother, was most likely influenced by past experiences, particularly relationships with my father's family" (Quote from INA Interview) "Papa used to tell me that like in the past, my father used to eat hard, he had to make his own money and even that rice was one in three with my sister". (Quote from INA Interview)

The Impact of Toxic Parents' Behavior

The negative impact of toxic parents behavior experienced by respondents is that after the respondent gets toxic parents' behavior, the respondent experiences mental health disorders such as severe depression like overstuffing, excessive anxiety experienced by the respondent, the respondent also feels low self-esteem and the respondent behaves deviantly such as smoking and taking sleeping pills that are not based on a doctor's prescription. Close friends as secondary data also observed when respondents were experiencing the negative

impact of their parents' toxic behavior, such as often feeling anxious in class, and respondents behaved deviantly such as smoking for peace of mind because of the impact of their parents' behavior so that they felt calmer.

Strategies for Dealing with Toxic Parents

In dealing with a toxic family environment, the respondent applies several strategies to still deal with toxic behavior from his parents, respondent tries to understand his parents' background and build empathy, even though he is still hurt. He is also motivated by inspirational figures in his environment who are able to survive difficult situations.

In the face of prolonged psychological pressure due to toxic parenting, respondents developed a number of coping strategies, both adaptive and maladaptive. This strategy is used as an effort to survive the emotional pressure they experience from childhood to adulthood. This adjustment reflects a psychological response to an unsupportive family environment and lack of affection.

One of the most prominent strategies is avoidance coping. Respondents often choose to avoid direct confrontation with their parents when conflict occurs. Respondents prefer to leave the house, stay in their rooms, or not give verbal responses as a form of self-protection. This strategy, while momentarily calming, is essentially an escape mechanism from stress that does not solve the core of the problem.

"I prefer to leave the house, like going out, rather than facing it, because I'm really fed up. If not, I just stay silent when my mother is angry." (Quote from INA Interview) Research by (Capella & Adan, 2017) states that avoidance coping tends to be associated with increased anxiety and depression in the long run, because the repressed emotions are not channeled constructively. As a counterweight to this strategy, respondents also showed seeking social support-based coping (seeking social support). He tends to seek emotional protection and

a safe place to tell stories through his closeness to close friends and one of the supervisors who is considered to understand his situation. This form of coping is categorized as an adaptive strategy because it involves the regulation of emotions through positive interpersonal relationships.

“I usually tell my friends, especially my close friends, so I don’t feel too burdened. There is also one lecturer who knows. After telling them, I feel more relieved, like the burden is somewhat reduced.” (Quote from INA Interview)

According to (Robbani et al., 2025), social support serves as a protector against psychological distress and assists individuals in managing stress in a healthier and more targeted manner.

However, overly intense pressure also pushes respondents into maladaptive coping forms, such as the consumption of mild psychoactive substances—cigarettes, vapes, and sleeping pills. This behavior is used as an escape mechanism from inner pressure that is not channeled in a healthy way. He admitted that the use of the substance was not based on pleasure, but as a form of survival from constant psychic pressure.

“I tend to think, ‘Maybe my mother is like this because perhaps I did something wrong.’ I tend to reflect on myself quite often.” (Quote from INA Interview) This kind of coping is associated with an increased risk of anxiety disorders and depression, as revealed in a study by (Aldwin, C. M., & Werner, 2007), that destructive coping strategies such as substance use can worsen psychological conditions and lower an individual's emotional resilience.

Despite all the burdens felt, respondents showed the existence of a mechanism of self-reflection and an effort to build positive meaning (meaning-making). Respondents understood why their parents were harsh, by tracing the background of their stressful lives, whether in terms of economy, family responsibilities, and past experiences. This understanding does not necessarily erase the inner wounds she feels, but is the first step in creating a space of empathy

for her parents. This strategy shows emotional maturity and the potential for the development of psychological resilience. Folkman and Moskowitz (2004) refer to this approach as positive reappraisal, which has been shown to reduce stress and improve general well-being.

Furthermore, the respondent expressed a desire to reconcile with his mother. Respondents hope to one day be able to talk heart-to-heart, discuss family issues openly, and build healthier communication. Although it has not been fully realized until now, this hope reflects problem-focused coping. These efforts indicate that the respondent is not completely passive in dealing with the situation, but is slowly trying to take control of his interpersonal relationships.

"I want to be closer to my mother, to talk about what the problems between us have been, so that we can become closer again." (Quote from INA Interview) The participant also emphasized the importance of communication within the family "Communication is very, very important for a family." (Quote from INA Interview) These statements indicate that the participant did not only respond to family pressure by withdrawing or seeking support outside the family, but also expressed a desire for closer communication with the mother. The participant specifically hoped that family members could discuss existing problems and the importance of mental health.

Authoritarian Family Dynamics

Parental Control over Personal Decisions

The participant experienced parental control over important personal decisions, particularly regarding education and her future. Although she was already 21 years old, she reported that her parents continued to direct her choices and expected her to follow their decisions. "I'm already 21 years old. I should be able to decide for myself, but my parents always say, 'Just follow what your parents say; the path will be easier.'" (Quote from INA Interview). The participant also reported that her parents had previously encouraged her to choose English,

while she preferred Guidance and Counseling. This finding is consistent with Firdaus and Kustanti (2019), who found a significant negative relationship between authoritarian parenting and career decision-making. Their findings indicate that authoritarian parenting can be associated with difficulties in making decisions concerning future choices.

In the present case, parental control was therefore reflected in the participant's experience of having her educational and future choices influenced by parental preferences.

Limited Autonomy and Decision-Making

The participant also described limited autonomy in making decisions independently. She stated "Almost every time I make a decision, I am not confident. I always ask here and there because since I was little, I was never given the freedom to decide what I wanted." (Quote from INA Interview). This finding is consistent with (Putri et al., 2024), who found that authoritarian parenting had a significant negative effect on adolescents' independence. Their study showed that higher levels of authoritarian parenting were associated with lower levels of independence.

The finding is also relevant to (Herwandi Putri & Satwika, 2023), whose qualitative study of young adults aged 18-25 who experienced authoritarian parenting found that restrictive and controlling parenting was part of their psychosocial experiences. Thus, the participant's experience shows that authoritarian family dynamics were manifested through parental control over personal decisions and limited autonomy in making independent decisions.

E. DISCUSSION

Toxic parenting is a parenting style that systematically damages children's emotional development. This style is usually characterized by a combination of excessive control, verbal insults, emotional manipulation, and a lack of empathy for the child's feelings. As a result, children experience decreased self-esteem,

difficulty recognizing themselves, and long-term mental health disorders according to research articles (Fadhilla & Siregar, 2024).

Faktor Toxic Parents

The toxic parenting experienced by the respondents was not formed suddenly, but was the result of the accumulation of psychological and sociocultural dynamics that lasted for many years in the family system. In this context, a number of determinants were found that play a major role in shaping parenting behaviors that are harsh, less empathetic, and often emotionally damaging to children.

One of the main factors that stood out was the childhood experience of the respondent's father who grew up in very limited economic conditions. This limited environment forms a survivalist mentality in fathers, which is a mindset that emphasizes toughness, strict discipline, and rejection of the expression of emotional weakness. This harsh lifestyle is indirectly inherited to children through high expectations and a demanding parenting approach, but lack of affection. This phenomenon is in line with the concept of transgenerational trauma, in which unresolved trauma in one generation is psychologically transmitted to the next generation through parenting patterns (Yehuda & Lehrner, 2018). The Family Stress Model also explains that significant economic stress in a parent's past can have a direct impact on their parenting behavior becoming harsher and unsupportive (Conger et al., 2010).

On the other hand, the respondent mothers – despite coming from a more stable economic background – experience a high psychological burden due to having to carry out two roles at once: as the main breadwinner and the breadwinner. This dual role pressure causes emotional exhaustion which often leads to an emotional outburst or emotional outburst for children, especially when financial demands are at their peak. In the study (Vitoasmara et al., 2024),

explained that parenting stress that is not accompanied by adequate social support and coping can lead to impulsive, abusive, or inconsistent parenting patterns.

Another factor that worsens the parenting dynamics in this family is the disharmony of values and backgrounds between fathers and mothers. The father carries survival values from his past, while the mother has perfectionist standards and a strong desire to be socially recognized. These inconsistencies create internal conflicts in the parenting approaches applied, which ultimately create inconsistencies in the way children are treated. Conflicts in parental relationships can disrupt the family's overall emotional system, including damaging the relationship pattern between parent and child.

Furthermore, the mothers' professional background as educators may contribute to the expectations they place on their children, particularly in relation to academic achievement and social performance. In the participant's experience, the mother frequently compared the participant with other students or children who were perceived as more successful, both academically and socially. These comparisons were accompanied by high expectations and criticism when the participant did not meet the standards established by the mother. Such parenting behaviors can be understood as part of a broader pattern of toxic parenting when they repeatedly place psychological pressure on the child and negatively affect the child's emotional well-being. Kurniati et al. (2023) explain that toxic parenting may involve parenting behaviors that negatively affect children physically, psychologically, and emotionally. Similarly, Ismiati (2024), through a qualitative phenomenological study, found that adolescents who experienced toxic parenting tended to develop feelings of inferiority, worthlessness, dissatisfaction with themselves, fear of facing challenges, and difficulties in establishing equal communication.

Thus, it can be concluded that the toxic parenting experienced by the respondents is not only a reflection of the individual character of the parents, but

also the result of a complex interaction between past trauma, economic pressures, role conflicts, and the need for social validation. These factors reinforce each other and form a family environment that is full of tension, unsupportive, and lack of emotional warmth, which directly impacts the psychological well-being of children.

The Impact of Toxic Parents' Behavior

Toxic parenting experienced by the participant had a substantial impact on the participant's psychological condition and social functioning. The negative effects of these parenting experiences were reflected in several aspects of the participant's emotional and behavioral functioning. According to Azmy et al. (2017), negative parenting experiences may extend beyond immediate emotional responses and influence individuals' emotional patterns, ways of thinking, and behavioral responses over time. Consistent with this perspective, the participant in this study reported several psychological and behavioral manifestations, including anxiety symptoms, depressive symptoms, decreased self-esteem, and non-adaptive coping strategies.

These experiences indicate that the impact of toxic parenting in this case was not limited to the participant's emotional state but also extended to the participant's self-perception, responses to psychological pressure, and social functioning. The participant's decreased self-esteem was reflected in difficulties in recognizing personal strengths and increased sensitivity to criticism. Meanwhile, anxiety and depressive symptoms were described in relation to the emotional pressure experienced within the family environment. The emergence of non-adaptive coping strategies further indicated difficulties in managing the emotional consequences of family-related stress. Therefore, the findings suggest that the participant's experience of toxic parenting involved interconnected psychological, behavioral, and social consequences rather than a single isolated emotional response.

First, psychologically, respondents experienced depressive symptoms characterized by repeated overthinking tendencies, deep feelings of failure, and withdrawal from the social environment. He feels that he is not good enough, is often shrouded in guilt, and is afraid to make mistakes for fear of being criticized or compared. This is consistent with the findings (Hallen & Godor, 2020), explaining that harsh parenting is negatively correlated with life satisfaction and emotional regulation, as well as reinforcing the use of destructive coping strategies such as avoidance and self-blame. In their journal it was stated, "Negative coping styles mediated the association between harsh parenting and lower life satisfaction" (Hallen & Godor, 2020).

Second, emotionally, respondents experienced instability in emotional regulation. He has difficulty expressing his feelings openly and tends to harbor negative emotions such as anger, disappointment, or sadness. When faced with conflict, respondents prefer to remain silent, withdraw, or avoid, which reinforces patterns of emotional suppression. This indicates the existence of chronic emotional dysregulation, as described by (Amin & Elias, 2023), that unresponsive parenting patterns can weaken a child's ability to adjust and manage emotions in the social environment.

Third, in the aspect of identity and self-esteem, respondents feel unworthy and often question their abilities. Negative verbal treatment such as being labeled "stupid" or unfairly compared to others gradually erodes self-confidence. He feels that he is never good enough in the eyes of his parents, thus forming a low and fragile self-perception. Individuals with low self-esteem formed since adolescence tend to experience life dissatisfaction, problematic relationships, and vulnerability to depression in adulthood.

Fourth, in response to chronic emotional distress, respondents began to use coping strategies that were maladaptive. He consumes cigarettes and occasionally uses sleeping pills to calm himself down when under pressure. Respondents

mentioned that the action was not a form of pleasure, but rather a "momentary solution" to avoid excessive stress. This phenomenon reflects avoidance coping, which is a strategy of avoiding problems instead of solving them, as explained (McKenzie, 2018), that avoidance-based coping and the use of psychoactive substances have the potential to worsen psychological conditions and create an emotional dependence on unhealthy escape.

Fifth, from the relational aspect, respondents have difficulty in establishing healthy emotional closeness. He admitted that he was more comfortable sharing with friends or supervisors than with his own family members. This indicates the existence of interpersonal trust fractures in the nuclear family environment. Loss of emotional attachment to parents is a major obstacle in the process of forming self-concept and emotional security.

Strategies for Dealing with Toxic Parents' Behavior

In dealing with toxic parents, respondents emphasized several strategies to deal with a toxic family environment, namely, respondents showed layered adaptive and maladaptive responses as a form of trying to survive psychological pressure due to the toxic parenting they received since childhood. According to (Virgianto et al., 2023), this coping strategy is a manifestation of complex emotional dynamics, as well as an individual's attempt to seek psychological stability in the midst of a dysfunctional family environment.

One of the most prominent strategies is avoidance coping, in which respondents choose to withdraw from direct confrontation with their parents. They tend to stay in the room, leave the house when conflicts occur, or avoid emotional conversations that can trigger arguments. This strategy, while providing temporary relief, does not solve the root of the problem at hand. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) stated that coping strategies that are repeated avoidance have the potential to strengthen the symptoms of anxiety and

depression because individuals are not given a safe space to express their emotions constructively.

In dealing with inner pressure, the participant was also active in building an emotional support system through interpersonal relationships. The participant established warm relationships with close friends and regarded the supervisor as a trusted adult figure. This strategy reflects an adaptive form of coping, as social engagement can help mitigate the impact of emotional stress and strengthen psychological resilience. According to (Atmasari & Adzkia, 2023), social support is one of the important predictors of coping with life stressors, particularly among individuals experiencing family-related stress.

The participant also demonstrated a tendency to engage in deep self-reflection regarding the behavior of the parents. The participant attempted to understand the causes of the parents' harmful behavior by considering their childhood backgrounds, economic pressures, and the burden of unbalanced gender roles within the family. This approach can be understood as a form of positive reappraisal, a cognitive coping strategy that involves reconstructing negative experiences into a more meaningful understanding. This process may broaden the participant's emotional perspective and support greater acceptance of the family situation without becoming entirely overwhelmed by past experiences.

However, emotional distress that was not optimally managed also contributed to the participant's use of maladaptive coping patterns. On several occasions, the participant reported using cigarettes and sleeping pills as a way to reduce anxiety and intense emotional distress. This strategy represents a form of substance-based coping, which (Olasehinde & Dara, 2025) suggest may pose risks to mental health when used as a means of temporary escape rather than addressing the underlying sources of emotional distress.

Despite these challenges, the participant was not entirely passive in responding to the family dynamics. The participant expressed a desire to engage in open dialogue with the mother as a form of problem-focused coping aimed at addressing interpersonal difficulties. The participant hoped to establish healthier two-way communication based on mutual understanding and listening. Although this process had not yet been fully realized, the participant's hope for reconciliation indicated an ongoing effort to improve the family relationship and demonstrated the potential for adaptive coping in responding to complex family dynamics.

F. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of qualitative research through in-depth interviews, it can be concluded that the toxic parenting experienced by the respondents has a significant impact on their mental health, self-esteem, and psychosocial adaptation patterns. Respondents exhibited typical symptoms related to dismissive and contemptuous parenting, such as neglect of emotional needs, demeaning verbal treatment, and systematic negative comparisons. The factors behind this parenting style include childhood trauma of parents, economic pressure, disharmony of gender roles in the family, and unhealthy social validation needs.

The impact of this parenting can be seen in various dimensions of respondents' lives, ranging from the emergence of chronic anxiety, self-esteem disorders, mild to moderate depression, to the emergence of maladaptive coping behaviors such as substance use (cigarettes and sleeping pills). Nonetheless, respondents also showed positive adaptation mechanisms such as seeking social support, self-reflection, and emotional reconciliation efforts with parents. Thus, the experience of toxic parenting, in the context of this research, is not only related to the psychological impact experienced by the individual, but also demonstrates the importance of social support and adaptive coping skills in

dealing with pressures originating from the family environment. In the context of Guidance and Counseling, these findings imply that counselors need to consider family dynamics as part of the assessment process, particularly when the client's problems relate to emotional distress, family conflict, limited decision-making, or difficulties in building interpersonal relationships. Assessments should not only focus on the client's individual circumstances but should also include family communication patterns, forms of parental control, sources of stress experienced by the client, and the availability of social support that can help the client cope with the situation.

The next implication relates to strengthening adaptive coping skills. Counseling can be directed at helping clients recognize emotions, develop adaptive problem-solving strategies, establish healthy boundaries, and develop more independent decision-making skills appropriate to the client's condition and developmental stage. Additionally, counselors can help clients identify and utilize sources of positive social support, such as peers, supportive family members, teachers, counselors, or other social environments. This support is especially important when clients experience limited emotional security and validation within their family environment.

A trauma-informed counseling approach can also be considered when a client's parenting experiences indicate deep emotional experiences, fear, insecurity, or violence. In its implementation, counselors need to create a safe, non-judgmental counseling environment, respect the client's experiences, and allow the client to determine the pace and boundaries of their experiences. If assessment results indicate psychological issues requiring treatment beyond the competence of a school or educational counselor, the client can be directed through a referral mechanism to a professional with the appropriate competencies.

On the preventive side, guidance and counseling services can also contribute by providing psychoeducation on healthy family communication, emotional management, problem-solving skills, adaptive coping, and developing social support. For parents, guidance or psychoeducation programs can be directed at improving understanding of children's developmental needs, responsive communication, establishing healthy boundaries, and parenting that avoids insults, threats, or excessive control. Therefore, the implications of this research are not only directed at the recovery of individuals who have experienced the negative impacts of parenting, but also at preventive efforts to reduce the likelihood of destructive family interaction patterns emerging.

However, this study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the study used a single-case study design with one primary participant, so the findings describe a very specific and contextual experience. Therefore, the findings are not intended to be statistically generalized to all Generation Z students or individuals experiencing toxic parenting. Second, most information regarding family experiences was obtained through participant self-report, so the data relies heavily on participants' ability to recall, explain, and interpret their experiences. Although the study used supporting informants, observations, and documentation as additional data sources, this information cannot fully replace the participants' perspectives on their subjective experiences. Third, this study did not obtain data directly from the participants' parents. Thus, this study was not intended to assess or diagnose parents, but rather to understand participants' experiences with parenting behaviors and family dynamics. The lack of direct parental perspectives also meant that interpretations of family dynamics were based primarily on participants' experiences and perceptions, as well as available supporting data sources. Future research could consider using a larger number of cases, including the perspectives of other family members when possible and ethically sound, and using a longer observation

period to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of toxic parenting and authoritarian families.

Based on these implications and limitations, this study indicates that addressing issues related to "toxic parenting" within the context of guidance and counseling requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account the counselee's individual circumstances, family dynamics, adaptive coping skills, and social support networks. Such an approach enables counselors to gain a more contextual understanding of the counselee's issues while determining the appropriate forms of service, support, or referrals to meet their needs.

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