Toxic Positivity in Adolescents: An Attitude of Always Being Positive in Every Situation

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ABSTRAK

Toxic positivity dikenal sebagai konsep promosi kebahagiaan yang berlebihan. Konsep ini meyakini bahwa tetap bersikap positif dengan mengabaikan emosi negatif merupakan solusi yang tepat dalam menghadapi masalah. Kesalahpahaman tentang konsep tetap positif ini tentunya bukan karena emosi negatif tidak dapat dihindari dalam kehidupan manusia. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis lebih dalam makna dari konsep toxic positivity, dalam hal apa yang dipikirkan dan dirasakan oleh mereka yang mengalami toxic positivity, khususnya dalam konteks hubungan. Penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi ini berfokus pada pengalaman individu dengan toxic positivity dalam kehidupan pergaulannya, mulai dari respon, perasaan, dan dampak apa yang muncul ketika mendapatkan toxic positivity. Pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini dilakukan melalui wawancara. Data yang diperoleh kemudian diolah dan dikategorikan ke dalam tema-tema berikut. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa toxic positivity dianggap sebagai respons motivasi yang tidak tepat. Toxic positivity response memunculkan perasaan tidak dimengerti, kemarahan, dan kekecewaan, dengan dampak negatif tidak hanya secara fisik tetapi juga secara psikologis. Pelaku dianggap berasal dari individu yang belum pernah mengalami masalah serupa sebelumnya dan kurang memiliki empati. Selain itu, toxic positivity juga ditemukan pada verbal abuse..

ABSTRACT

Toxic Positivity is known as the concept of over-promotion of happiness. This concept believes that staying positive by ignoring negative emotions is the right solution in dealing with problems. This misconception about the concept of staying positive is certainly not by the fact that negative emotions are unavoidable in human life. The aims of this study is to analyze more deeply the meaning of the concept of toxic positivity, in terms of what those who experience toxic positivity think and feel, especially in the context of relationships. This qualitative research with a phenomenological approach focuses on the experiences of individuals with toxic positivity in their social relationship life, starting from what responses, feelings, and impacts arise when getting toxic positivity. Data collection in this study was conducted through interviews. The data obtained were then processed and categorized into the following themes. The findings show that toxic positivity is perceived as an inappropriate motivational response. The toxic positivity response elicits feelings of not being understood, anger, and disappointment, with negative impacts not only physically but also psychologically. The perpetrators are considered to come from individuals who have never experienced similar problems before and lack empathy. In addition, toxic positivity was also found in verbal abuse.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the most common ways to achieve happiness are by focusing on positivity, positive emotions, and positive traits. This three fall under the large umbrella of Martin Seligman's theory of Positive Psychology, which will be referred to hereafter as the concept of positivity. This concept seeks to revive life's meaning, despite life's difficulties and traumas (Kumar & Cavallaro, 2018; Lamont, 2012). Previous study state thinking is a form of mind that is accustomed to looking for the best results from the worst possibilities (Peale, 1986). He further explains that positive thinking is seeing all events with full

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knowledge that there are bad things in this life, but it would be better if we emphasize attention to the good. Other theory explain positive emotions as an important part of human evolution toward happiness (Fredickson et al., 2009). Furthermore, this concept of positivity plays an important role in subjective well-being (SWB) and psychological well-being (PWB), prevents prolonged negative emotions, helps restore cardiovascular activation, and increases motor activity and cognitive flexibility through an increase in the hormone dopamine (Ashby et al., 1999; Ghodsbin et al., 2015; Scheier & Carver, 1992). This concept is widely used when facing problems, unfortunately, the good effects do not always apply to everyone. In some cases, people who have focused on positive things when experiencing problems later feel worse, worthless, and blame themselves (Chan & Mak, 2017; Petrocchi et al., 2017; Sudiansyah et al., 2023). For example, as in a study conducted by previous study the repetition of self-positive statements can be ineffective and make things worse, especially for those with low self-esteem (Wood et al., 2009).

On the other hand, along with the popularity of this positivity concept, the phenomenon of misconceptions regarding its proper use still occurs. Especially in the context of social relations or relationships. An example of a situation that may be familiar or at least has been experienced is the experience of having a problem that brings up feelings of defeat or heaviness (Bambang Subiyakto, 2019; Liaw & Huang, 2013). On one occasion when sharing the story about the problem with relatives or friends, the response given then did not support but instead cornered. In the end, there is a feeling of guilt for not seeing the existing conditions positively (Harland, 2017; Mahfouz, 2020). This experience of focusing on the positive at the same time can also be interpreted as rejecting negativity, especially the experience of negative emotions. This is where the concept of being positive becomes unrealistic and unhelpful. This over-promotion of the concept of positivity is then also referred to as toxic and more familiarly known as "Toxic Positivity". Toxic positivity is defined as the concept of staying positive as the right way to go through life (Lukin, 2019; Sinclair et al., 2020). Meanwhile, according to previous study Cherry (2021), toxic positivity is the belief that no matter how difficult and terrible the circumstances are, one must maintain positive thinking (Cherry, 2021). Previous study added that toxic positivity means focusing only on positive things and ignoring anything that triggers negative emotions (Quintero & Long, 2019).

Based on the definitions by experts, it can be concluded that toxic positivity is the belief in excessive positive concepts, demanding a person to always be positive in all circumstances and all situations. ignoring negative emotions. Previous study further explained that the process of toxic positivity will result in denial, minimization, and invalidation of the experience of human emotions (Wang et al., 2021). In other words, the main feature of toxic positivity is the rejection or not justifying the presence of negative emotions. Other study believes that repeated invalidation of one's feelings and thoughts can cause more problems in emotional development than we can imagine (Hall & Cook, 2012). According to previous study ignoring negative emotions can magnify these emotions (Lukin, 2019). From previous research, it was found that individuals who suppress their emotions above unpleasant conditions or behave like nothing is happening have physiological arousal (a state of being aware, alert, and having full attention physiologically, characterized by increased activity such as a faster heartbeat and so on) which is more significant (Gross & Levenson, 1997).

Based on reality, discussions about toxic positivity are easily found in several articles on social media, but there are still many who do not understand this concept. Some people, through a survey conducted by the researcher, claimed to be confused about how to respond well to others, so that they can still be positive without fear of being toxic. Referring to the existing phenomenon, the researcher is motivated to analyze more deeply the meaning of the concept of toxic positivity, in terms of what those who experience toxic positivity think and feel, especially in the context of relationships. As a new and under-researched topic, this research can be useful for understanding the psychological processes that occur in a person with the experience of toxic positivity, as well as what impact toxic positivity can have. In the end, this research can provide an understanding of the response that should be done to still be able to carry out the concept of positivity without having to end up being toxic.

2. METHOD

This study used a qualitative method with a phenomenological design, to obtain a description of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Sudiansyah et al., 2023). Participants were determined through an initial survey using a simple questionnaire containing questions about knowledge about toxic positivity and a brief story of the experience. This survey was conducted to reach out to people who had experiences of toxic positivity, with a total of 56 people completing the survey. Furthermore, concerning more specific criteria; having experienced toxic positivity in the context of relationships or relationships between individuals, two individuals were determined as participants (Megavitri et al., 2023; Ramadhanti et al., 2022). Data collection in this study was conducted through interviews. During the interview, participants

were given the freedom to tell their experiences related to toxic positivity first, then get more specific based on the open-ended questions that have been prepared such as emotions felt, responses regarding the experience that occurred, and so on. The interview recordings were then processed into verbatim data, then analyzed to obtain the psychological meanings of the participants (Kamid. et al., 2021; Suud et al., 2022). The analysis technique consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusions (Astalini et al., 2022; Miles et al., 1994). Furthermore, the themes that appear verbatim are then grouped into a unity of meaning which is included in the results as research findings. Efforts to increase the reliability and validity of this research were carried out by member checking, free and detailed recording of important things, complete and neat documentation, and finally checking and rechecking.

There were two participants in this study. The first participant, who will be referred to as P1, is a 21-year-old woman. P1 has experienced *toxic positivity* in her relationships both with family and friends since elementary school. The second participant, who will be referred to as P2, is a 20-year-old woman. P2 experienced *toxic positivity* in her social relationships with her teachers and friends, starting when she was in high school. The data collection process in the form of interviews was carried out for 3 months, starting from May to August 2021. The data obtained were then processed and categorized into the following themes.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result
Experience & Understanding of Toxic Positivity
The experience of toxic positivity in both participants occurred in the context of relationships or relationships, including relationships with authority figures such as teachers or lecturers, as well as peer relationships. Overall, the experience of toxic positivity in P1 is related to the response to remaining grateful in a situation that is not good and comparing the problems experienced with other people's problems. The first experience occurred when P1 was in elementary school, in addition to getting advice to be grateful and compare herself, P1 was also considered a crybaby by her friends. A similar experience also occurred during college with one of her friends. After receiving unpleasant news about the problems at home, P1's friend then immediately responded by comparing P1's situation with others, downplaying P1's problems and thinking P1 was exaggerating. "It's not that I don't like it, it's just that it's out there. There are still people who are worse than you, whose families are more destroyed, but they are still strong. You're just like that like you feel the most victimized, even pointed at show me." (P1, personal communication, May 25, 2021). In addition to peers, toxic positivity was practiced by P1's internship supervisor. When she protested against the grade she got, P1 was asked to be grateful, "You should be grateful to get an AB, you see your friends," she said. many others get B what... get C." (P1, Personal Communication, July 09, 2021). This response then became toxic because the value obtained was not by the work performance that P1 did. In family life, toxic positivity sentences are often given by her father, as a form of verbal abuse. For example, being grateful for having a good financial condition, as well as comparing herself to her friends' conditions. This is toxic and inappropriate because such suggestions and responses are not following the problems she is experiencing, namely hoping to have a harmonious family and not objecting to her work performance. their financial and economic level.

Similar to P1, P2's toxic positivity experience began when she was in school. Toxic positivity was carried out by her teacher who asked P2 to be grateful amid a bad situation. When complaining about being overwhelmed due to the busy activities at school, the teacher told P2 to be grateful, and compared them with others, especially with themselves who felt that he had been through the same situation as P2 and his friends. "Ah, you're not much! Already you are grateful,   still, many other people out there are not as lucky as you to be able to go to school, to be able to get extra hours like this. for the exam". (P2, personal communication, August 17, 2021). The next experience occurred after the death of her father. When knowing the grief experience, P2 received many condolences. Some of these remarks then ended up being toxic because they underestimated P2's loss caused by Covid-19, and compared P2's family prevention behavior with their family. "Well, what is the name of a dead person... let alone Covid, it's like you don't know Covid, if I were you, I would definitely ... my parents would fly to Singapore." P2 understands that as humans, it is not easy to always be positive in all circumstances so it is wrong to assume the responsibility to be positive. Both participants learned the term toxic positivity from the internet. They then interpreted it as a person's wrong and inappropriate response to others who are in trouble. According to P1, this response causes a burden for people who are in trouble, because they are required to always be positive. P2 calls it a response that rejects negative emotions. "Like for example there are people who need input, other people are telling us... but we use words for that person to always be positive. So... rejecting other

people's negative emotions, by asking them to "Oh just take the positive... just take the positive". Like that." (P1, Personal Communication, May 25, 2021).

Same Experience

There is an assumption in both participants when experiencing toxic positivity, that the perpetrators of toxic positivity do not have the same experience as the participants. As was the case with P1 who experienced domestic violence in her family life, it was known that friends who responded to toxic positivity did not experience the same thing, instead, they were children who had a good relationship with their parents. "Because he doesn't have the same experience as me. His family is complete, and then... his relationship with his parents is quite good, meaning that he is also close to his papa and mama, younger siblings, and older siblings. Yes, he doesn't feel what I feel ... so yes, he won't understand my position of me." (P1, Personal Communication, July 07, 2021). Whereas in P2, her friends who gave toxic responses were those who did not experience the same experience, namely not survivors of the Covid 19 virus and had health insurance, unlike P2's family. P1 considers that by not experiencing the same thing as what the participant has experienced, her friends are unable to understand her. Previously, P1 had shared a story with a friend who had experienced a similar condition to her. In contrast to other friends who compare the intensity of the problem, P1 and this friend understand each other and provide reinforcement. This led to the understanding that having the same experience will make one more understanding of the other person's situation. "It's because of my experience because when I was I had the chance to meet people at college- people who have the same experience as me, and uh ... when I tell them about my problems, they understand what it's like, so they strengthen each other. So it's like "Oh ya we can understand each other", it's different with friends who don't have the same experience as me. When I tell them, they feel like "Oh that's just like that, there's more out there" like that." (P1, Personal Communication, August   08, 2021).

Inappropriate Motivation

Another cognitive response that emerged was the assumption of inappropriate motivation. This inappropriate motivation is believed by the participants to be the purpose of the perpetrators of toxic positivity, namely the responses given were initially an attempt to provide support but ended up not on target or not by the participants' circumstances. P1, for example, interpreted that toxic positivity arose from positive sentences to help but eventually became "toxic" because the sentences given were not following the circumstances that occurred and the needs of others. For example, when P1 objected to the grades she got that did not match what she did, or P2 complained about the density of school activities, lecturers and teachers, were asked to be grateful. P2 understands that the original intention was for her students to be motivated to get through the situation, unfortunately, it became inappropriate because of course the teacher's experience and the conditions experienced by P2 at that time were different. "But from as far as I can conclude that ... my teacher wants to try to give us motivation but with his experience only So. "I can get through this... I've been you" but he (the teacher) doesn't understand what that means." (P2, Personal Communication, August 17, 2021).

Emotional Response: Anger and Disappointment

The emotional responses experienced by both participants were dominated by anger and disappointment. These emotions emerged after The perpetrators often put the participants in a corner and exaggerated their problems. For example, P1 felt that the response given seemed to force him to stay strong in conditions that were not okay. Likewise, in P1, disappointment was motivated by a sense of trust and hope in the people around him who turned out to be the perpetrators of toxic positivity for him. "Disappointed there is... and then feel alone because it's like, When I tell them and they don't respond well, I feel like... oh my goodness I feel alone, and then disappointed with them friends   like   that."   (P1, Personal Communication, August 08, 2021). The death of his father was caused by Covid- 19, then made Covid-19 a sensitive discussion for P2. The trivial view and lack of empathy are also a source of anger, he is also disappointed and regrets how the attitude of people during the Covid-19 Pandemic is considered by P2 to be unable to empathize with others. According to him, there is no need to give a lot of long-winded words, but just empathize with the events he experienced.".. what else does Covid carry. Ya see, so many people in Indonesia are not all dead because of Covid. Moreover, the position yesterday was also hit by me, my sister was hit, my father was hit... the first to be called was only It's just my father. Why is it so easy?" (P2, Personal Communication, August 17, 2021).

Feelings of Not Being Understood

Both participants felt not understood by the people around them. Instead of feeling better with support, the participants tended to be overestimated, and the problems faced were also trivialized by the perpetrators. Both participants also understood that this incomprehension was caused by the absence of similarities in the experiences that occurred between the participants and the perpetrators. perpetrators. These feelings were felt by both participants after getting responses such as to stay positive and sentences cornering the participants who were experiencing unpleasant circumstances. "Uh at that time, just in my mind ... "you guys don't understand my position anyway.." I mean "you don't feel what I feel, so you can just say things like that." Then if I'm in my heart, I'm like "why don't you understand my condition, why can I be like this..." (P1, Personal Communication, July 09, 2021).

Toxic Positivity and Verbal Abuse

Through the experience that The sentence toxic positivity was found in the context of verbal violence. This experience only happened to P1 in her relationship with her father. In the family, P1's father does not have a relationship that is considered good. Good with family members, both P1's mother and younger siblings. There are several sentences given by his father as an abuser, which are sentences in the form of toxic positivity. The sentences These sentences among them are asking P1 to always be grateful for her situation, comparing the situation of P1 with the situation of her friends. All sentences and suggestions This is completely incompatible with What she experienced and needed was a harmonious family, so those words became toxic to her. "Uh so it's like this... so like my father said I should be grateful because My finances are more fulfilled, meaning that my needs financially and economically are more fulfilled than my friends or other families. But I feel like it's not enough, why? For me, it's not enough if it's just financial, while the role of my parents, I feel is still lacking." (P1, Personal Communication, June 09, 2021).

Coping Strategies & Impact of Toxic Positivity

Both participants realized that providing resistance or rebuttal when getting a toxic positivity response was futile. In responding to the toxic positivity events experienced, both participants tended to remain silent and harbor their feelings. At first, P1 gave resistant to one of his friends. Unfortunately, this resistance did not necessarily awaken, instead, it gave rise to a feeling of not understanding each other. "It's also useless to explain, their people too I don't understand. Then, in the end, I felt sad, how come I'm replying like this. How come you don't understand my condition. " (P1, personal communication, June 09, 2021). In contrast to P1, P2 refuses to provide resistance or rebuttal to the toxic positivity response he gets. While at school, P2 had expected the next toxic positivity response that her teacher might give, so she considered it futile to argue. The problem is that if I answer again "Yes miss, but we are like this... like this", the answer will still be the same repeatedly. Again. "I'm fine, don't complain... you guys..." so when I hear things like that, I just let it go and try to focus on the lesson even though my mind is really tired (P2, personal communication, August 17, 2021). According to P2, giving a rebuttal to this response does not guarantee that the toxic positivity response to the perpetrator will stop. So that P2 finally prefers to be silent.

Next, after receiving the toxic positivity response, both participants tend to suppress their feelings. P1, for example, suppressed sad emotions and feelings of disappointment by not crying at all, while P2 suppressed her anger for some time, then expressed it. by crying. In addition, P2 can vent her emotions by letting them go or "letting it flow" when getting advice from her mother. P2 then made her experience a lesson, knowing how to respond well to friends who are experiencing loss. "Yes after I let it flow, after I calmed myself down, I was able to... I can accept it, and it's a lesson from myself, maybe if there are friends of mine who also feel the loss, then what should I do... because I already feel it if I'm asked questions like this, it's not good. So if you want to say condolences, then condolences... send prayers to the families left behind, there's no need to pry.... too much." (P2, personal communication, August 17, 2021). In addition, P1 then avoided the problem by shifting his focus to other activities, such as riding around on a motorcycle, eating, or sleeping. He does these activities when he starts to feel sad emotions and thoughts about his friends' responses make him uncomfortable. Even so, he admits that things didn't help her release stress, and she realized that the escape was only temporary. "Because it's like... when I do that, For a moment I don't think about my problem and I don't think about the attitude of my friends, but after I don't do that, sometimes I suddenly think about the problem. So I... yes I think it's 50% work." (P1, personal communication, August 08, 2021).

After often suppressing their negative emotions, both participants had to experience both physical and psychological impacts. For P1, physically, she felt the sensation of chest churning, shortness of breath, and dizziness. Mentally, she felt depressed and mixed emotions of anger and sadness, feeling

alone and lonely. P1's lowest point was when the participant was still undergoing education at the junior high school level, the impact of these feelings had developed into suicidal ideation, even so, P1 canceled the idea after listening to a sermon at church. Furthermore, he diverted it by hurting himself, namely by cutting his body parts or banging his head against the wall. The series of effects described above then led to mental problems for P1, as evidenced by the *diagnosis of Bipolar Depressive* by a psychiatrist. However, P1 ascribes his mental state to what he calls the "bitterness" of his relationship with his father. "*Yes, in the end, it's like this… it hurts. What I don't realize is that, because of My bitterness with him, I became mentally ill, and had to take medicine and have therapy … so dependent* " (P1, Personal Communication, June 09, 2021). For P2, the impact tends to be psychological. Feelings of being alone and having no support appear to P2. The toxic positivity response he As a result, P2 tends to feel guilty and blame herself for not being able to be positive about the situation. "As far as I've experienced, most of the toxic positivity advice tends to make me feel guilty," she said. After blaming myself, I was at a point where I felt that I had no one and no one to support me and understand how I felt, so the person who was blaming me was the one who was blaming me "self-pity" (P2, personal communication, August 17, 2021). In addition, both participants then became more careful in telling stories to others. P1 thinks that not all people who give positive responses can give appropriate responses. "Sometimes they talk positively to us but it's not on target, it doesn't match our situation." (P1, personal communication, June 09, 2021). Both participants felt the need to choose who was the right person to talk to. "Well, it's almost the same as before, more careful when telling stories, more filtering stories … or to other people, pick and choose which stories I want to filter too, pick and choose people the right one if you want to tell a story." (P2, Personal Communication, August 17, 2021).

Empathy in Respon

People who are considered to be genuinely helpful are defined by both participants as those who have empathy. Both participants agreed that the perpetrators of toxic positivity are those who are unable to empathize. The marker behaviors of this empathy, according to both participants, are help with actions/offers of help, willingness to listen, and not just giving positive sentences. Whereas people who are not empathetic can be seen in the behavior of the perpetrators who not putting themselves in the other person's shoes and blaming the participant instead. During college, P1 shared her problems with her close friends. The response from her friends was to listen carefully to P1's story, then offer help. This type of response made P1 comfortable and thought that they were more capable of empathizing than other friends. "Like that… the average that I get, I have empathetic friends. When I have a problem, they immediately say "Eh, there's something I can help you with to make you happy again?" or "Let's go somewhere so you can be happy" like that…"(P1 Personal Communication, June 09, 2021). Some of them even followed up or ask about P1's condition a few days later, this shows how much they care about P1. P1 did not have a problem with the positive words, but by not understanding her condition in this case, and ignoring her negative emotions - the response of support from friends became toxic. In contrast, by understanding what P1 feels and listening, validating negative emotions, or allowing P1 to feel her negative emotions, she feels empowered. "Oh.. here, so for example like this. I had a problem with my family yesterday, Then I told one of my friends and she said "It's okay if for example maybe your father doesn't love you, maybe he doesn't care about you … but you have to remember you can't hurt yourself. Because after all there are still people who still love you" like him, then other friends.. who still care about me. So because I heard that story, I was like ohh...uh, it strengthens me." (P1, Personal Communication, August 08, 2021).

Condolences that then do not appreciate the feeling of grief, by P2 these sentences are then considered not to contain empathy. P2 understands that in life, every human being will have a low point, and in relationships, empathy has an important role. More specifically in the current Covid-19 Pandemic situation, P2 regrets people who have shallow empathy. In contrast to the behavior of his close friends, who contacted him a few weeks after his father's death, P2 called them more empathetic. According to him, his friends understood the grief he was experiencing and gave him time to feel sad and lost. "I'm not sad, sis… maybe I'm just disappointed because indeed the people are also like…I know people who lack empathy. Even though it's a situation like this, regardless of the Covid situation … I mean, in all circumstances people must face the lowest point in their lives. Not just talking about me, but other people … and it turns out that many people can still be like that. (not empathizing) yes disappointed … disappointed because you should be in the conditions like this, other people's conditions are difficult … yes, empathy is what is needed, you don't need a lot of words." (P2, Personal Communication, August 17, 2021).

Discussion

The concept of staying positive in all conditions is believed to help a person get through the problems they face. The misconception of this concept is then referred to as toxic positivity. Both participants' experiences with toxic positivity were experienced in their social relationships, both with relatives and family. This social relationship was not limited to peers but it turned out that toxic positivity was also carried out by authorities, such as teachers and lecturers. This experience of toxic positivity occurred when both participants tried to seek support by telling their stories about the problems they are experiencing. The responses given by the perpetrators are responses that require participants to focus only on positive things and reject the negative emotions felt by the participants. This is known as the invalidation of negative emotions, which is the denial, rejection, or removal of one's emotions (Bennett et al., 2019; Long, 2017). *Toxic positivity* is considered an unhelpful positive response, due to the absence of similarities in the experiences and backgrounds of the perpetrators and the two participants. For example, P1's friends who do not come from *broken homes*, or families that are less harmonious, or P2's friends who are not affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic. The assumption regarding this matter is common in society, that the same experience will certainly lead to the same understanding. Evidently for P1, when she met a friend with the same experience as her, P1 was freer in sharing her problems, felt understood, and could strengthen each other. The similarity between one's experience and the condition of others - is also influenced by the intensity of reflection on the experience, then a person will be more likely to understand and empathize with others (Gerace et al., 2015; Hodges et al., 2010).

Furthermore, this *toxic positivity* response is also considered inappropriate or misdirected motivation. The participants believed that when they complained about the problems they were experiencing, the perpetrators, both friends and teachers and lecturers, actually wanted to provide support by trying to see the positive side. In short, then the participants were asked to be grateful for the circumstances and discomfort they experienced, so this is the reason why it is referred to as the "positive side". The motivation was not on target. Instead of support, both participants were indirectly forced to get out of their "negative state". On the other hand, it is possible to inadvertently invalidate emotions, to help others feel better (Kamaruddin et al., 2023; Long, 2017). This cannot be separated from the culture of positivity, which teaches that focusing on and always being positive is the solution to problems. The reality is that staying positive in unpleasant circumstances is not the right solution for everyone, it can backfire later (Ahmadi, 2017; Wood et al., 2009).

After getting a response that was not as expected, even unimaginable before, anger and disappointment became the emotional response that emerged in both participants. In addition, participants also seemed to be considered guilty for letting themselves not think positively and exaggerating their problems. According to previous study the anger that arises is a response to feeling hurt due to getting unexpected behaviour (Susanti et al., 2014). Disappointment arises later after the expectation of getting support ends with a series of toxic positivity responses. Generally, one of the reasons someone tells problems to others is to get advice or support. Other study states that getting social support can mean that a person is being loved, cared for, and valued by others (Wills, 1991). Not getting this social support, at P1, a feeling of being alone and lonely emerges. This is following by previous study that the lower the social support, the higher the loneliness experienced (Batara & Kristianingsih, 2020). On the other hand, this disappointment is also inseparable from expectations.

For example, P2's expectations were broken regarding how someone should have empathy, especially in the Covid-19 Pandemic situation which then claimed many lives, including her father. Anger and disappointment in both participants then ended in feelings of not being understood. The behavior of trivializing the problem, considering the participants to be excessive in responding to the problems that occurred, and blaming them for feeling negative emotions, then became a benchmark for how the perpetrators did not understand the participants' situation. By asking participants to remain grateful, toxic positivity then becomes an unrealistic and unhelpful form of assistance. Whereas validation of feelings can help a person feel heard and understood (Hall & Cook, 2012; Jawas, 2019). Apart from everyday relationships, sentences similar to toxic positivity are also found in more complex contexts such as domestic violence. This happened to P1 in her family life. Toxic positivity appears as a form of a sentence when she experiences verbal violence. Even so, the sentence that appears here cannot solely be called toxic positivity. It is known that toxic positivity is a misconception of positive concepts and perspectives. The concept of positivity is centered on human character based on morals in living life so that it becomes the main determinant of happiness/unhappiness (Arif, 2016; Quintero & Long, 2019). Therefore, if aligned with this understanding, the goal of toxic positivity is to lead to happiness. The difference is that toxic positivity is oriented towards getting that happiness immediately, by ignoring negative emotions. On the other hand, the perpetrators of toxic positivity also have a motivational background of "providing help", while verbal violence is an act of violence. Verbal violence is not limited

to negative sentences but also includes shouting and yelling at others, this does not occur in toxic positivity (Erniwati & Fitriani, 2020; Quintero & Long, 2019). On the other hand, the background to assist does not occur in the context of violence. In responding to the experience of toxic positivity, both participants had the same coping strategy, namely not being open with their problems, and being silent. The decision of both participants to be silent and become closed is in line with that said forcing someone to stay positive in a situation that is not okay will only make them silent and not communicate their problems (Quintero & Long, 2019). Most of us don't want to look "bad", so when problems arise there are two options, either to be honest and open or to pretend that everything is fine. Both participants preferred the second option. By keeping quiet, closing themselves off, and reducing the intensity of their storytelling, both participants then held their emotions inside. In addition, P1 also avoided these "uncomfortable" emotions by diverting them to other activities. According to this action can be referred to as an escape avoidance technique or avoidance behavior from the problem at hand (Maryam, 2017). Meanwhile, P2, performs self-controlling techniques, or self-control actions in regulating his feelings, in this case through suppressing anger and waiting for the right moment to vent. The choice to avoid P1 hurts his physical and mental health. Indeed, emotions that are ignored are not solely Instead of just disappearing, they will stay inside us, and can even grow to be scary. This pile of psychological complaints then led to the diagnosis of Bipolar Depressive in P1 (Compare et al., 2014; Gross & Levenson, 1997; Witvliet et al., 2019). This is supported by previous studies on the impact of suppressing negative emotions, namely a significant increase in physiological arousal, rumination, and psychological disorders (Lamont, 2012). In P2, the impact felt tends to be psychological, feelings of guilt appear to him because he is unable to be positive about the problems experienced. This is one of the signs of toxic positivity caused by the invalidation of existing emotions (Quintero & Long, 2019; Rochefort et al., 2018). The impacts that occur support that repeated invalidation of one's feelings and thoughts can cause more problems in emotional development than we can imagine (Hall & Cook, 2012). The complexity and intensity of the severe impact on P1 cannot be separated from the fact that her experience has occurred since elementary school, with sentences similar to toxic positivity being part of the verbal violence she experienced. As for P2, the short duration and acceptance of the toxic positivity response that she had done, made the impact tend to be lighter.

Both participants understood the perpetrators' lack of empathy toward them. Previous study summarizes empathy as an activity to understand the thoughts and feelings of others (Taufik, 2012). Empathy according to both participants is inseparable from helping behavior or providing assistance, being willing to listen, and not just giving positive sentences. This kind of response then only ends up blaming participants who cannot take the positive side of the existing problems. Empathy has a positive relationship with helping behavior, where someone who has empathic concern can bring up helping behavior as an appropriate way to reduce the suffering of others (Batson et al., 1991; Hoffman, 2001). In addition, the provision of this assistance cannot be separated from the fact that whether the assistance provided is the assistance needed by the participants or not. This then connects how validation also plays a role in the process of helping and empathy. Previous study states that the validation response is empathic, while the response given by the perpetrators of toxic positivity contains invalidation of the participants' emotions (Enz et al., 2007). According to such a response indicates a person's low empathy capacity. Empathy has four psychological conditions including; imagining what others feel in their condition, imagining how someone thinks and feels with their condition, feeling like what others feel, and feeling for others in need (Happé & Frith, 2014; Hodges et al., 2010). This was indirectly done by one of P1's friends, by allowing her to feel her negative emotions, then P2's close friends who gave her time to heal her wounds from the grief and loss she experienced. From these actions, both participants felt understood and understood.

4. CONCLUSION

Toxic positivity is seen as a response that comes from a few people who tend not to have the same background problems, or who misperceive the problems of others. While the original intention was to motivate, this response has since been discredited. Positive sentences are given at the right time by not paying attention to the feelings of the interlocutor, thus invalidating negative emotions and existing problems. Referring to this goal, although positive sentences can be found in the context of verbal violence, it does not necessarily make the sentence can be categorized as toxic positivity. The experience of toxic positivity then makes participants quiet, not open to problems, and cautious when they want to tell problems about others. Long-term effects then take the form of negative impacts, both physically and psychologically. In addition, the intensity of the impact cannot be separated from the duration of the participants' experience. Shallow empathy is a reason that can explain the background of these toxic

positivity perpetrators. In contrast to toxic positivity, attentive responses, and empathy, made both participants feel more empowered by the existing problems.

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