

Neuro-Linguistic Programming: An Alternative Approach in Neutralizing the Suffering of Intimate Partner Violence Victims

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Abstract. This review aimed to investigate the suitability of *Neuro-Linguistic Programming* (NLP) to be applied as an intervention to neutralize the suffering of dating violence victims. The annual records of *Komnas Perempuan* reported that the number of dating violence in Indonesia was quite high at 2,073 cases in 2018, which classified these cases as serious problem and in need of immediate treatment for the victims of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). The method used in this research was literature studies to gather relevant and latest materials. The general results obtained found that *Neuro-Linguistic Programming* can be used as an alternative approach to neutralize the suffering the intimate partner violence victims.

Keywords: neuro-linguistic programming; intimate partner violence; literature review

1 Introduction

World Health Organization (WHO), in 2017, conducted a comprehensive survey and stated that around 1 in 3 (35%) women worldwide had experienced violence. Most of this number was violence committed by a partner. In worldwide, almost one third (30%) of women who are in a relationship reported that they had a violent experience from their partner. Globally, as many as 38% of female killings or femicide/feminicide are committed by male partners. WHO also recorded data showing the prevalence of violence committed by partners, and in Southeast Asian region occupied the highest percentage of violence against women (VAW). The number of violence against women in this region reached 37.7%, followed by the Eastern Mediterranean region by 37%, Africa region by 36.6%, North American region at 29.8%, European region at 25.4%, and the Western Pacific region at 34.6%.

The 2019 Annual Report of *Komnas Perempuan* (National Commission on Violence against Women) reported that the number of cases of violence against women increased by 14% in 2018. The number of VAW cases in 2019 was 406,178; this number increased compared to the previous year, which was 348,466. The Annual Report mentioned that domestic or intimate relationship violence, violence against wives ranked first, with 5,114 cases (53%), followed by intimate partner violence or dating violence by 2,073 cases (21%), violence against girls by 1.7417 cases (14%), and the rest were violence committed by ex-husbands, violence by ex-boyfriends, and violence against domestic workers (22%). The highest percentage of forms of violence were physical violence (41%), followed by sexual

violence (31%), psychological violence (17%), and economic violence (11%). Cases of violence against women in Central Java were still quite high. *Lembaga Resource Center Kesetaraan Jender dan Hak Asasi Manusia (LRCKJHAM)* recorded 311 cases of violence against women in 2018 [2]. According to the Head of Information and Documentation Division of LRCKJHAM, Witi Muntari, the issue of violence against women remained high due to the awareness level of public and victims who were reluctant to report violence they experienced. Based on LRCKJHAM report, they handled 63 cases from consultation to legal assistance. The cases were mostly in Semarang with 34 cases, Demak by 8 cases, Kendal by 5 cases, then Pati and Rembang each with 3 cases. The most common types of violence were domestic violence, sexual slavery, sexual harassment, and rape.

The 2019 Annual Report of *Komnas Perempuan* recorded that violence against women was the second highest level of domestic or personal relations violence with 2,073 cases. The phenomenon of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) or dating violence is a very serious problem because around 75% of domestic violence emerge during dating relationship [3]. Upon further research, IPV phenomenon is similar to those of iceberg phenomenon, in which people can only see its surface, while the rest of the iceberg is hidden under the sea level. This also means that many dating violence and its victims are not reported to relevant institutions [4]. This is proven by the results of the 2019 Annual Report of *Komnas Perempuan*, which found that dating violence ranked second (2,073 cases) in domestic or personal relations violence.

World Health Organization (2012) defined intimate partner violence or dating violence as behavior that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, forcing sexual intercourse, psychological abuse and controlling behavior in a partner. American Psychological Association (1996) explained that dating violence is a form of physical abuse, which also includes emotional, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse, and stalking behavior of a partner. Researchers at the University of Michigan's Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center [7] defined dating violence as intentional actions performed by using hurt tactics and physical coercion to obtain and maintain strength and control over their partners. Violent behavior conducted by the perpetrators usually is not done out of coercion from others, but the perpetrators consciously decide to perform such behavior because the perpetrators intend to maintain control over their victim so that they remain dependent or bound to the perpetrators. Martha (2003) stated that dating violence is included in the realm of intimate partner violence, in which the perpetrators and victims have close personal relationship or intimacy.

WHO classified dating violence into three types; these are physical violence, psychological violence, and sexual violence. These three types of classification were often used and reported in studies (Devries et al., 2013). Physical violence is violence referring to the use of physical force to cause pain, injury or physical suffering to the victim. Sexual violence within the context of dating violence is sexual harassment referring to forced sexual intercourse with a partner who does not consent to it, hurting the partner during sexual intercourse or forcing the partner to have sexual intercourse without protection [10]. Psychological violence is a type of violence referring to the use of certain behaviors aimed at embarrassing and controlling his/her lover publicly or privately. This also includes verbal abuse, constant harsh remarks/criticism, blackmailing, embarrass their partner through verbal statement or action, threat, and restricting access to friends and family [11].

The repercussions of dating violence cases are quite serious, and one of them is an unwanted pregnancy. WHO recorded (2013b) that 38% of pregnancies occurring around the world each year were unwanted pregnancies. This figure reached up to 80 million pregnancies per year. WHO also noted that there were 34 million unwanted births per year, 4 million

ended in miscarriage and 42 million were aborted. Sinaga (2009) revealed that in Indonesia there were an estimation of 1 million teenagers who were pregnant out of wedlock each year. According to United Nations records (2011), an estimation of 1.7 million under-24-year-old women were pregnant and gave birth each year in Indonesia, and around 500 thousand of them were still teenagers. The report by the head of *Jaringan Peduli Perempuan dan Anak* (JPPA) in East Java, Widanti (2011) showed that the number of junior and senior high school students who were pregnant out of wedlock would continue to increase. The second problem was the onset of child marriage. A 2013 report mentioned that in Indonesia, the age group with the highest percentage of marriage was the group of women aged 15-19 years [16]. The issue of child marriage also has its negative consequences and repercussions. According to Santrock (2007), the emotional condition of women in this group of age is still unstable and unpredictable. This can have negative impacts on the psychological and emotional development of the children they care for.

Ratih et al. (2016) found that dating violence continued to appear due to several factors such as the pattern of avoidance-insecure attachment with parents, which becomes the basis of survivors for dating violence victims. This condition causes individuals to experience anxiety about separation, so that the DV victims would choose to stay in the hostile or toxic relationship. Furthermore, they are also encouraged by the needs of physical and emotional contact as the implication of lack of love from their parents—especially of father figure as an opposing gender figure. Another factor influencing the occurrence of dating violence is the fact that the perpetrator used to be a victim, or had directly or indirectly witnessed such violence, and also they had seen violence between men and women through mass media or immediate environment such as family. The last factor is that the system or elements surrounding the perpetrator have the potential to foster violent behavior.

Psychologically, dating violence victims could also experience symptoms of stress, depression, anxiety disorders, difficulty in concentrating, insomnia, and low self-esteem [18]. Furthermore, Ayu, Hakimi, & Hayati (2013) also showed that female victims of dating violence suffered from inferiority complex, passion for revenge, hatred, and distrust towards their partners (usually male partner). Another common consequence that occurs in dating violence victims also include Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder [20]. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a syndrome in which the patient could re-experience disturbing events, including avoidance, emotional numbing, and hyperarousal symptoms that occur in some individuals after experiencing a traumatic event [21]. Traumatic events are also defined through the experience or witnessing an event that threatens life or an experience of physical violence, which causes fear, helplessness or horror [22].

One form of intervention that will be discussed in this review is Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) to help neutralize the suffering of dating violence victims, in order to reduce the risk of future violence. A research conducted by Gray (2014) showed that NLP can reduce the number of individuals suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Pappas (2017) explained that NLP, in relation to treating past or traumatic experiences caused by violence, can help victims explore themselves to see their experiences from different perspectives, so that they can learn to react differently and simultaneously, are not bound by the existing negative thought patterns. Since dating violence cases have traumatic impacts, the implementation of NLP is expected to be applied to women or any victims who had experienced dating violence. This literature review aims to describe how this therapy can be useful and help to neutralize suffering and trauma of victims who had experienced dating violence.

2 Discussion

2.1 Intimate Partner Violence and its Relation to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory

Ecological theory is one form of comprehensive theory that can be applied to the phenomenon of violence in general. The theoretical model created by Bronfenbrenner (1977), explained how a person's behavior and development patterns were affected by their interactions with several systems. This theory has five systems that interact with each other. They are 1) microsystem which refers to the deepest layers in ecology theory, in which individuals interact directly with their environment, such as homes, schools, and workplaces; 2) mesosystem, which refers to interactions consisting of the interconnections between several microsystems, for example individual interactions including family, school, and peer groups. In brief, mesosystem is a system of series of microsystems; 3) exosystem, which refers to an expansion of a mesosystem that accepts other specific social structures, both formal and informal, which do not directly affect the development of an individual, in which the individual lives; 4) macrosystem is a more general or overarching interaction of individuals, such as culture, customs, law, and so on; 5) chronosystem, which describes historical events and transition periods that influence other system.

Ecological theory has been widely discussed and applied in research on violence. Banyard (2011) in his research used ecological theory to observe the phenomenon of violence, because this theory helped to see different aspects of dealing with a problem such as individual, environmental, situational, and other related sociocultural factors. More specifically, ecological theory was also used in research on dating violence [27]. Banyard (2011) also added that ecological theory could be used as a reference for understanding the phenomenon of dating violence by exploring the context in which individuals live, ranging from microsystems to macrosystems.

2.2 Neuro Linguistic-Programming

Neuro Linguistic-Programming (NLP) was first developed by Richard Bandler and John Grinder [28]. This model emphasizes that various events occurring in life that can affect an individual comes from the sensing process, which influences the subconscious through the mind. This sensing process becomes a part of the subconscious and shapes experiences because it is represented by the five senses, namely visual (vision), kinesthetic, auditory (hearing), olfactory (smell), and gustatory (taste) [29]. Bandler and Grinder also added that the disturbance of mind is caused by imperfect transformation of the deep structure, which is the deepest structure of experience into surface structure or the structure of materialized experience (Baskoro, 2018). Witkowski (2010) added that the central philosophy of NLP is summarized in the phrase that "The Map is not the Territory," which means that each individual operates on the basis of representation of his/her internal world (the map) and not the world itself (the Territory). The internal world of each individual is largely limited and distorted, NLP practitioners or therapists in this case play a role in understanding and dissecting based on the client's map territory.

Tosey & Mathison (2003) stated that NLP is a systemic theory that considers NLP to be arranged in an orderly and interrelated manner to form the totality between the internal experience (neuro), language (linguistic), and behavior (programming). In another sense, NLP is also a technique, perspective, method, information, and knowledge that utilizes linguistic positions that are related to the program in one's nerves to achieve the expected goals or objectives.

2.3 Pattern of Traumatic Experience of Intimate Partner Violence Victims

Dating violence is a serious problem and needs special attention because it has a significant impact on the victims and their mental health. One effect is trauma or post-traumatic stress disorder. American Psychiatric Association (2013) explained that traumatic experiences have certain criteria such as frequent disturbed thoughts, avoidance, negative changes in cognitive processes and moods. Recent research found that neuroendocrine dysregulation also plays a role in PTSD on dating violence victims. Similar to other stressors, the condition of dating violence victims will have an increase of stress hormone called cortisol. Cortisol is an oxidative substance, which damages anything in the body. If this condition occurs frequently and in a long period of time, it will damage the victim's physiological function, low immunity, and other psychological disorders such as inability to cope with stress [32]–[34].

The results of the above study were supported by a research conducted by Iverson et al. (2011) who suggested that trauma is one of the general consequences that occurs in dating violence victims. Traumatic events are events that can also influence the occurrences of emotional disturbances, thinking and behavior, as well as disrupting one's ability to build and maintain interpersonal relationships, social skills, that can result in social isolation [35], [36]. Based on the results of the above research, it can be concluded that Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a direct impact for dating violence victims, and it will have a detrimental impact if no intervention is given to the victims.

2.4 Basic Techniques in Neuro-Linguistic Programming

Neuro-Linguistic Programming in practice will have an impact on self-development and change in individuals through various forms or techniques in NLP [37]. The difference between NLP and other treatment methods such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy, and other cognition therapies is that NLP distinguishes the form of self by giving stronger emphasis to the manipulation of direct sensory representation (internal images, sounds, and feelings) to influence thought process, then further used with a more structured rapport approach or procedures for therapy using treatment-conflict goal (an NLP technique) or those aimed directly at the problem.

There are various principles and techniques that are included in NLP practice. First, **dissociation** is a technique of seeing mental states or self that are related "indirectly" to an event. We witness, hear and feel about an event that has happened from the perspective of a second person [38]. O'Connor (2001) added that dissociation is a very useful technique for looking back at experiences, learning from past experiences, and taking steps back from unpleasant situations. This technique puts emphasis on individuals to see themselves from different perspectives to overcome problems or difficulties that exist within themselves. The therapist invites or guides the client to see an experienced situation from another perspective to find things that have been ignored and find logic or other thoughts from logic or experience that had been formed.

The second NLP technique is **anchor**. This technique refers to a stimulus or information received through carnal sensors (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) and has an associative response that results in a particular state [38]. O'Connor (2001) mentioned that this technique is a very important part of life, because this technique can form habits on an individual. Furthermore, this technique also helps individuals to learn to be competent without direct realization. For example, we do not even need to think about having to stop at a traffic light during red light every time we are at an intersection; we will automatically stop because red light is an anchor to stop. Anchor can stimulate an action, such as stopping at a red light, or can change the

emotional state. Anchor can occur in any representation system. When what we see, hear, feel, taste, or smell constantly changes our emotional state, or when an individual consistently responds in a similar way, these are the examples of anchoring. Baskoro (2018) also added that this technique is used to easily access positive states in immediate manner. Only by triggering certain stimuli, we can immediately access certain state. In order for the technique to work effectively, the anchor formation process must meet the requirements, such as *the associate* (the client) must be associated or be truly present in the feeling that is being experienced. The next condition is *uniqueness of stimulus*, which means that every stimulus created must be unique and may not go through a stimulus that has often been done. For example, holding ear, pressing wrist, pressing thumb and ring finger. This is done so that anchor can really be distinguished from other movements, in which anchor is then easily formed and easily accessible. The next requirement is repetition. Anchor is formed through repeated repetitions. The more repetitions, the stronger the anchor that the client will create. Another requirement is *intensity of emotion*, which means when imagining events with resources, the experienced emotions will determine the smooth formation of anchors. The more the client feels that he/she is in a situation with high emotional intensity, the anchor will quickly form and become stronger. The last requirement is *accuracy*, which is the moment when the client is in the peak of intense emotion, then he/she must immediately anchor by performing the chosen stimulus or movement.

The third technique is **reframing**. Reframing is a technique in which the client learns to reframe the meaning of a situation or event that occurs to him/her (Baskoro, 2018). This technique is done to prevent us from creating negative reaction due to unpleasant perspective of an event, and instead, look for positive connotations of a thought or behavior that occurs in an event (Wilimzig & Nielsen, 2017). O'Connor (2001), more specifically, said that this technique functions in 'comparative generalization', which means changing thoughts about an unfavorable reality into a favorable situation. For example, "so far, I am fed up with my lover's behavior towards me," this situation is unfavorable, but by applying reframing technique, he/she could change the perspective into something beneficial for themselves. There are two types of reframing, they are *context reframing*, which is a redefining process by placing a particular meaning in a different situation or context, and the second type is *content reframing*, which means a redefining process by changing the meaning of the event.

The fourth technique is **Meta Model**. This technique is designed on the basis that each individual communicates verbally by deleting, changing, and generalizing *the deep structure* of self-experience into *surface structures*. Meta Model is a set of language patterns and questions that relate the deletion, alteration, and generalization with the resulting experience (O'Connor, 2001). Baskoro (2018) mentioned that language patterns could create more detailed information by asking questions that explore more specific information. O'Connor (2001) stated that this technique has several functions, which include to find missing information, clarify meaning by connecting with internal experience, change cognitive maps, and dig up more detailed and specific information.

The fifth technique is **The Milton Model**. This technique is a series of language patterns that are used to bring someone into a trance, a changing state of consciousness, where they can access unconscious resources, make changes, and solve their own problems [39]. O'Connor (2001) added that the condition of trance and hypnosis helps clients to learn about themselves and to express themselves better. Ready & Burton (2010) mentioned that this technique aims to reduce details and deliberately use abstract language that can be accepted by different people. Unlike the Meta model that uses language patterns with more specific purposes, the Milton model uses more general language patterns.

2.5 Past Studies Regarding Neuro-Linguistic Programming in Treating Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Previous studies have shown that the impact of dating violence includes Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). One study conducted by Pico-Alfonso et al. (2006) revealed that women who experienced dating violence, both physically and psychologically, had high levels of depression, anxiety, and PTSD, even they had the tendency of having suicidal thoughts. Fedovskiy, Higgins, & Paranjape (2008) in their research also found that women who were victims of intimate partner violence could suffer from PTSD. Based on the research above, dating violence is an important and urgent problem, so immediate intervention is also needed for dating violence victims. [24] explained that NLP is beneficial for those who experienced violence and those who had survived violence. The therapy technique mentions that there are points of influence in our minds that determine how we will experience all kinds of thoughts, which is done by finding thoughts that have influence and to embrace the strength and choice in responding to certain situations or experiences. In relation to traumatic experiences due to past violence, NLP helps the clients to explore and see their experiences from different perspectives, so that they can learn to react differently and thus not be bound to the simultaneous negative thought patterns that have been previously ingrained. The traumatic event experienced by victims of violence can be analogous as a never-ending and confined captivity and becomes a vicious circle for the victims of violence.

Utuzza, Joseph, & Muss (2012) revealed that NLP technique was effectively applied to clients with traumatic experience in Rwanda. Gray (2014) in an NLP study involving 30 American veterans who experienced Post Traumatic Stress Disorder obtained a 96% average of success with 25 patients completing treatment. Stipancic et al. (2010) revealed that NLPt (Neuro-Linguistic Programming Therapy) is effective in reducing psychological difficulties or disorders and improving the quality of one's life. Based on this research, it can be assumed that NLP approach is capable to handling psychological problems, such as trauma due to dating violence, changing violent behavior in dating perpetrators, and other social problems of dating violence victims. This is supported by Wake & Margaret (2014), in their research, which mentioned that NLP had the potential as a therapeutic tool to overcome the symptoms of anxiety, depression, and PTSD.

In his study, Hidayat (2009) found that NLP was able to overcome and assist dating violence victims in dealing with the trauma they suffered. One technique used in this research was anchoring technique for victims of sexual violence. The anchoring technique in this research was combined with the client's praying experiences to heal and help clients in coping with traumatic experiences. Individual representation system became perceptual roles and it entered the subconscious affecting individual behavior, in which this determined the normality of an individual. Meanwhile, praying experience served as a positive modality to achieve positive state needed during NLP therapy process. The continuity process between NLP therapeutic approach and religion proved that there was a significant recovery of the client during therapy session and relatively fast recovery time for PTSD.

Grimley (2016), in his research results showed that NLP can help eradicate the symptoms of PTSD on clients who were victims of violence. His research was a case study with a single subject, who was his own client, by combining the existing techniques in NLP such as meta models, operation, reframing, anchoring, and Milton Models in each therapy session. The research found that his client seemed to have more positive thoughts, did not experience flashbacks on disturbing thoughts, and showed that the client was able to be more productive, such as in producing music, and his client appeared to be happier with the obtained results.

3 Conclusion

Based on the literature review above, it can be concluded that the phenomenon of intimate partner violence and dating violence in Indonesia is a worrying and urgent issue warranting for immediate intervention. There are several methods discussed in this review, and one of the techniques suggested is Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). NLP is a holistic technique, which means that it not only concerns of people's behavioral dimensions, but also their physical, social emotional, cognitive and spiritual dimensions. Therefore, the implementation of NLP can be an alternative approach to neutralize the suffering of dating violence victims and change their inner situation, so that they can adjust themselves to be in a more positive and adaptive condition. In conclusion, it is important to carry out an empirical research, based on the perspective of Neuro-Linguistic Programming for individuals (especially women) who experienced intimate partner violence or dating violence in Indonesia.

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