

Audience Reception on the Toxic Relationship in “Persona: Collector”

Nicky Christian Paparang and Chory Angela Wijayanti

Communication Science Department Petra Christian University

ABSTRACT

Men and women have the same chance to experience toxic relationships. However, there is not much data or cases that show men can become victims in toxic relationships. “Persona: Collector” is one of the television episode that raises issues about toxic relationships from woman to man. Therefore, this research uses a qualitative descriptive approach and uses Stuart Hall reception analysis method to know how the audience interprets the toxic relationship message in “Persona: Collector. The data being collected through observation and in-depth interviews with four informants aged between 20-30 years. They are men and women who have experienced toxic relationships, also men and women who have never been in toxic relationships.

There are two major analysis about audience reception from the movie, such as the form of obsession in relationships and foolishness because of obsessive love. Informant reception is divided into three positions in the form of obsession in relationship, that is dominant hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional. In the second concept, audience reception is divided only in two positions, dominant hegemonic and negotiated. Their positions can be different because each informant has a different background, such as experience itself and/or seen also heard other people stories about toxic relationships. The other factors come from their knowledge, beliefs, and gender.

Keywords: *toxic relationship; persona: collector television episode; reception analysis stuart hall; obsession in relationship; foolishness because of obsessive love*

INTRODUCTION

Everyone wants to have healthy relationships with other people, including romantic relationships. Every couple must maintain a balance between physical closeness, close friendship, and effective communication, so the goal can be achieved. With communication, couples can convey feelings, share their dreams and hopes, or discuss a solution to solve the

problems between each other (Savitri, 2021). However, if a relationship has been filled with bad or unpleasant moments, couples need to be aware about potential of toxic relationship.

According to Lilian Glass (in Savitri, 2021), toxic relationships are described as a relationship which is full of conflict, competes with each other without respect, and attempts to control partner. The characteristics can be gaslighting behaviour; lots of lies; often blames the partner; commit emotional, physical, or mental violence to their partner (Suchyo, 2022). Unfortunately, this form of toxic relationship often occurs in society.

Clara Sutantio, finalist at “Asia Next Top Model 5”, relationship can be an example of a toxic relationship in the form of violence. She received physical, psychological, and verbal violence from her boyfriend (Corbuzier, Oct 18, 2022). This phenomenon was also strengthened by a report from the Minister of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection which recorded 27,589 victims of violence in 2022. This number consisted of 25,050 female victims and 4.634 male victims (“Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan”, n.d).

Based on the data, it can be seen that toxic behaviour and personality are not related to gender. Men also have the potential to become victims in toxic relationships. However in Indonesia, there is limited statistical data or information related to male victims of toxic relationships in the form of violence due to a culture of toxic masculinity. In contrast to South Korea, where the phenomenon of toxic relationships that has been revealed in mass media is manipulative and gaslighting. It is further supported by the case of Kim Seon-ho, where his girlfriend often lies to him (Arbar, 2021).

Considering the matters above, mass media especially film is the solution to bring awareness to the society. Many people from all levels of society liked this type of mass media because it can provide entertainment, as well as education. Not only that, film is able to bring the fact in reality and broadcast it on the screen to everyone (Sobur, 2004). There are some previous research about raising toxic relationship issues through film to prove this theory.

First, there is research about “Toxic Relationship Representation in the Story of Kale Movie ‘When Someone’s in Love’” written by Joshua Alberico Tedjo in 2021. Next, there is research about “Toxic Relationship Representation in Layangan Putus Web Series” by Silma Mega Oktaviani and Diana Amalia in 2022. Last, there is research about “A Reception Analysis of Toxic Relationship in All Too Well: The Short Film by Taylor Swift” by Tutut Ismis Wahidar and Shafira Ardhana Reswari in 2021.

“Collector” is an episode of the “Persona” series which is considered to raise the issue of unhealthy relationships from women to men in dating. That’s because Yim Pil-Sung as the director explained that the story is about a man’s foolishness, which later turns into love. He also mentioned the word “obsession” is one keyword that describes “Collector” (Korea Now, 2019). This film only 27 minutes long, so the director have to choose the messages carefully and concisely therefore they are understood by the audience (Azhar, 2003). However, audience reception can be different with the messages that the producer made, considering they have different backgrounds and characteristics. The evidence can be seen from audiences who reviewed differently. There are some who give positive responses and negative responses to this series.

Based on the phenomenon and information above, researcher concluded that audience reception at the messages in the mass media can be varied. Since they have different backgrounds, knowledge, and experience between each other. Therefore, researcher will use Stuart Hall's reception analysis method to find out about audience reception on the toxic relationship in the "Persona: Collector" television episode. Informant's will be distinguished with some categories such as gender; age range between 20-30 years; as well as experienced and non-experienced in toxic relationships.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Movie as a Mass Media

According to Javandalasta (2011), movie is defined as a sequence of moving images that contains a story and is known as a movie or video. On the other hand, Alfathoni (2020), defined a movie as a complete collection of audio-visual images capable of recording social and cultural realities within it. That's the reason a movie is considered to convey messages in the form of visual media. From these two definitions, it can be inferred that a movie is a collection of moving images that can deliver messages contained within it. The messages can encompass various things, such as stories, knowledge, or social and cultural realities.

As a part of mass media, movies serve multiple functions when presented to a vast and diverse audience simultaneously. For example, they function as a source of information, entertainment, persuasion, cultural transmission, fostering social unity, surveillance, correlation, and preserving social heritage. Due to their substantial quantity, movies can be classified into various categories, one of which is through genre classification

Reception Theory

Reception theory centres on the audience and explores how they perceive and interpret the messages from the media. Each audience plays an active role in interpreting these messages, wherein involves actively engaging in the thought process and creatively seeking meaning in the messages (Littlejohn, 1999). Moreover, contextual factors like the frame of reference and field of experience can influence audience perspective, leading to diverse interpretations from the same messages. For instance, the audience's identity, social background, history, movie, or genre of the program (Hadi, 2009).

Reception analysis is an approach that seeks to understand how society receives messages from the media and ascribes meaning to them (Ahmad Toni & Fajariko, 2017). This approach emphasizes two things: the media serves as a reflection of the socio-cultural context, and as a process of giving meaning through the audience's perception of experience and production. There are three aspects that must be considered in analysing the audience's reception: text, context, and intertextuality. However, according to Stuart Hall, there are three forms of interpretation results between the communicator and the audience: dominant-hegemonic position, negotiated position, and oppositional position.

Toxic Relationship

According to Dr. Lilian Glass (in Savitri, 2021), toxic relationships are described as a form of relationship where both individuals lack support for each other, full of conflicts and competitions, attempts to weaken the other party, lack of mutual respect and cohesion. Meanwhile, Christy (2022) defines toxic relationships as being characterized by damaging behaviours, involving abuse, degradation, and humiliation inflicted by the one person to another (sometimes reciprocally), through verbal, non-verbal, or physical. On the other hand, Graham (2022) marked toxic relationships as connections with toxic behaviour that can damage self-esteem, drain energy, and are characterized by selfish and dominant attitudes aimed at controlling the victim.

Based on these three definitions, a toxic relationship is defined as an unhealthy relationship characterized by various destructive behaviours because of negative emotions to control the partner. There are three forms of these destructive behaviours, such as verbal, non-verbal, or physical. Verbal destructiveness involves hurtful words that weaken, demean, insult, or even undermine someone's self-confidence. Non-verbal destructiveness can manifest as the silent treatment to induce feelings of guilt or discomfort. Meanwhile, physical destructiveness involves actions that cause physical harm like slapping, hitting, choking, and so on.

Toxic behaviours can be done by anyone, regardless of gender, due to feelings of jealousy or frustration arising from a sense of inadequacy. The perpetrators of toxic relationships often feel insecure and strive to dominate the relationship (Ibrahim, 2021). Therefore, effective communication plays a vital role in establishing emotional intimacy and cultivating a healthy relationship. Through communication, individuals can express emotions, dreams, hopes, or work together to resolve issues. It is crucial to recognize that the key to maintaining a good relationship lies in healthy and strong communication.

METHODOLOGY

Research Conceptualization

This study utilizes a qualitative descriptive approach along with the reception analysis method, which emphasizes the audience's process of attributing meaning to messages based on their knowledge and life experiences. Stuart Hall classified audience responses to messages into three positions. First, there's the dominant-hegemonic position, where individuals positively receive media messages. Next, there's the negotiated position, in which individuals acknowledge presented messages while also considering other messages. Lastly, there's the oppositional position, where individuals reject the messages conveyed by mass media (Baran, 2003).

Researcher employ two methods on predetermined informants to collect data. First, is the interview method with informants to gain insight about how these individuals perceive and interpret the issue of toxic relationships that are depicted in the film. Next, researcher use the

observational method when informants are explaining the messages they received from the “Persona: Collector” television episode. This strategy serves the purpose of enabling researchers to clarify audience responses and perspectives through the emotions they conveyed. In this way, researcher can gather as much information as possible while also building rapport.

Subsequently, the validity of these data will be evaluation through triangulation method, involving an interview with Christy Maria Sucahyo, the author of the book “Toxic Relationship Free: Ketika Hubungan Meracuni Masa Depan, Apa yang Harus Dilakukan?”, and the Founder of Komunitas Pacaran Sehat. Additionally, researcher integrate information from literature to reduce potential biases during the analytical process.

Research Subject

The subjects in this research are the audience who watched the “Persona: Collector”. Individuals from the audience who participate as informants must watch the “Persona: Collector” television episode, willing to become informants and willing to discuss their experiences and knowledge concerning toxic relationships. By doing so, they can explain their opinions and perspectives about the phenomenon that is presented in the movie. If they have not seen this series, the individuals are not suitable subjects for the researcher. They were specifically chosen using a purposive sampling technique. Researcher chose four viewers based on different categories like ages between 20 and 30; gender; and a background involving experience with toxic relationships.

The classification of research subjects into different categories was motivated by various factors. Initially, individuals aged between 20 and 30 years old due to their position in the early adulthood phase. At this stage, individuals tend to establish more serious relationships, such as marriage. If individuals successfully develop this intimacy, they can encounter affection and fondness from others. However, they tend to feel isolated if they are not successful. (Maradoni & Rozali, 2022).

The second categorization is gender where researcher separated participants into male and female groups. This occurs due to the fact that the information and statements offered by individuals of both genders may different, even when watching the same movie. Typically, women have the propensity to present intricate explanations and views associated with their emotions. On the other hand, men's reactions are characterized by less detail, diminished emotional attachment, and a tendency to express their opinion in a broader scope (Wahidar & Reswari, 2021).

The third category revolves around the backgrounds and experiences of informants regarding toxic relationships. Informants were classified into two segments: those who experienced toxic relationships and those who did not. This categorization stems from the understanding that the audience's perception of messages is shaped by contextual factors, causing meanings to be perceived differently among individuals with different backgrounds or experiences. Individuals who experienced toxic relationships might grapple with psychological strain, including worries, traumatic experiences, or fear of repeating past negative events. Naturally, these factors can lead to different interpretations of the message compared to individuals who have not experienced toxic relationships (Yanti, 2023).

Based on the criteria, there are four individuals who willingly participated and matched the specific requirements:

Table 1. Research Informants

Informan	Jenis Kelamin	Usia	Pengalaman
MHA	Man	23 y.o	Experienced Toxic relationship
GV	Woman	22 y.o	Experienced Toxic relationship
RS	Man	22 y.o	Never experience Toxic Relationship
ATL	Woman	21 y.o	Never experience Toxic Relationship

Apart from indicating willingness and fulfilling the predetermined requirements, there are other considerations that guided the researcher to choose the four individuals above as informants. The primary factor is their experiences of toxic relationships. MHA, as a male survivor, has experienced a toxic relationship with destructive behaviours that are quite similar to those portrayed in the “Persona: Collector” television episode. For instance, undergoing silent treatment and not being acknowledged by his girlfriend. Researcher got to know MHA because lived in the same boarding house during an internship program in Yogyakarta. GV, as a female survivor, has frequently confronted gaslighting and manipulation from his ex-boyfriend. These experiences align with the toxic behaviours that are illustrated in the movie. Researcher has known GV since high school, which gave insight into her romantic relationship journey experiences from the beginning until the end.

The second consideration is for those who never experience toxic relationships. Researcher selected RS as a male non-survivor because he has never engaged in a romantic relationship throughout his life. Consequently, it can be inferred that RS never experienced a toxic relationship. Similar to GV, researcher has known RS since high school and is familiar with RS’s stories about dating relationships. On the other hand, ATL is a female who never experiences toxic relationships. Although ATL has previously been in romantic relationships, they were non-committal relationships and took place long ago. Therefore, the researcher evaluated that ATL has also never been involved in a toxic relationship. ATL was a colleague of the researcher during an internship program in Yogyakarta, and had the opportunity to listen to ATL stories about her romantic relationships.

Data Analysis

This research utilizes the Miles and Huberman method, which consist of three components. First component is data reduction, a phase of analysis involving sharpening, categorization, direction, data organization, and elimination of irrelevant details. The second component involves arranging the collected information in a way that facilitates the derivation of conclusions and the identification of actionable steps. Lastly, there’s the process of drawing conclusion, a qualitative analysis stage where the focus is on uncovering meanings, identifying patterns, seeking explanations, exploring potential configurations, investigating cause-and-effect relationships, and formulating propositions (Sihalahi, 2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

“Persona” is a Netflix original series from South Korean starring Lee Ji Eun (IU) that are available worldwide on Netflix. This series was released on April 11, 2019 and its attempt to explore four distinct personas possessed by the actress. Lee Ji Eun portrays these four personas in four different episodes: Love Set, Collector, Kiss Burn, and Walking At Night, with episode running for approximately 19-27 minutes.

In the Collector episode, viewers are presented with the story of a mysterious young woman named Eun (Lee Ji Eun), who is on a date with her boyfriend, Baek Jeong-U (Park Hae Soo). Despite being in a committed relationship, Eun frequently interacts with other men. This includes going on a ten-day vacation with two men to an island, frequently checking her phone during their date, and even kissing another man. Jeong-U keeps his emotions to himself even when he is witnessing all these actions. Jeong-U doesn’t want to lose Eun because he loves her deeply and he acknowledges that it’s her mysterious allure that captivates him.

However, Jeong-U's frustration reaches the limit when Eun expresses her boredom and desire to end their date. Jeong-U tries to talk to Eun, telling her that she shouldn’t act this way. But, instead of responding positively, Eun asserts that she has the right to make choices because they are in a non-committal relationship. She even criticizes Jeong-U for being uncool and constantly talking about love.

The episode reaches its climax when Eun challenges Jeong-U to prove his genuine love by taking out his heart. Eun knows that Jeong-U can't do such a thing, and she says “No one has ever been willing to sacrifice that much for me.” Hearing this, Jeong-U unbuttons his shirt quickly, takes out his heart, and gives it to Eun.

During the press conference for the “Persona” series, Yim Pil-Sung as the director of the “Collector” stated that the story’s motif in this movie originates from the foolishness of men. He also mentioned that “obsession” is a keyword to describe the essence of this television episode. It has the potential to be the starting point for the development of toxic relationships. Furthermore, obsession in love is a feeling that involves an intense desire to protect and give excessively attention to their loved ones. However, when dominated by fear, possessiveness and jealousy, this can make the feeling of love unstable and dangerous for their partner (Rohati et al., 2022).

In contrast to the qualities of a healthy relationship characterized by trust, care, and mutual respect. A persistent obsessive relationship can be the beginning of a toxic relationship, which is an unhealthy relationship with destructive behaviour aimed at controlling one’s partner (Rohati et al., 2022).

Drawing inspiration from this narrative, researcher conducted an analysis of audience responses to the messages of toxic relationships. Specifically focusing on the portrayal of obsession in the movie. In this context, obsession can be the starting point for the development of toxic relationships. The results show that the audience’s reception can be divided into two category, which include:

Form of Obsession in Relationship

Obsession is a feeling that is incredibly difficult to eliminate, yet it persists continuously even when a person wishes to remove it (Wolman, 1979). However, according to Bogerts (Nadha, 2019), obsessive love disorder is an extreme form of romantic affection that can transform into obsession over time. From the definitions above, obsessive love can be comprehended as an extreme form of romantic feeling that persists continuously, making it very challenging to eradicate. Typically, this kind of affection is influenced by feelings of anxiety, insecurity, or vulnerability. Based on that, the researcher aimed to uncover their perception of the concept of obsessive relationships in “Persona: Collector ” movie through interviews.

MHA, as a male survivor of a toxic relationship, agrees that Jeong-U displays obsessive love and possessive behaviour towards Eun. This is evident in Jeong-U’s actions, as he coerces and demands that Eun to fall in love with him by sacrificing his own heart. However, coercive actions and demands should not have place within a relationship. Nevertheless, according to MHA, Eun actions also raise concern as she goes on a vacation to an island with another man without permission and communication. Whereas providing updates to each other is a form of communication that can strengthen relationships, including romantic ones (Rohimi, 2021).

ATL, a woman who has never experienced a toxic relationship, also agrees that Jeong-U behaviour potrait signs of obsession. This is substantiated by Jeong-U, who has a large frame with Eun photo at his house and is willing to break off his engagement for a younger and attractive woman. In contrast, engagement is a form of effort to understand and get to know each other towards marriage for the sake of creating a harmonious family (Sugitanata & Rozak, 2020).

Similarly, GV as a woman who has experienced toxic relationships also agrees that there are obsessive behaviours in their relationship. But, these behaviours are seen in Eun, who is obsessed with collecting love from multiple men. That can be seen from her bag containing many jars filled with hearts from men other than Jeong-U, suggesting an ongoing pattern of obsession. This aligns with the definition of obsessive love as an extreme form of romantic affection that persists continuously, making it hard to eliminate. The presence of numerous hearts in her bag indicates that such occurrences have happened repeatedly.

In contrast with the other three informants, RS, as a man who has never experienced a toxic relationship, disagrees with the notion that Jeong-U behaviour is obsessive. RS perceives that Jeong-U is still able to control his emotions when Eun disappears for ten days without updates. In RS view, Jeong-U behaviour can not be classified as an obsession. One of the characteristics of an obsessed individual is having significant jealousy. Feelings of jealousy can be defined as complex emotions with various elements such as fear of abandonment, anger, and humiliation (Rohati et al., 2022).

Foolish Due to Obsessive Love

“Collector” is one of the episodes from the “Persona” series, with a story about the foolishness of men. As defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, “foolishness” is the quality of being unwise, stupid, or lacking good judgement. Stenberg (2002, p.236) defines “foolishness”

as an extreme failure of wisdom. From these definitions, it can be concluded that “Collector” plot revolves around Jeong-U, a man who exhibits profound lack of wisdom, being unable to discern between good and bad things. Eventually, this foolishness is exploited by his girlfriend, Eun to dominate Jeong-U and develop a toxic relationship. Based on this, researcher aims to explore how informants perceive and interpret the message of foolishness in the television episode.

MHA, the first informant, agrees that Jeong-U's actions are foolish because he tries to force his love on Eun and sacrificing his own dignity. Furthermore, MHA notes that Jeong-U is aware of the imbalance in their relationship, yet chooses to continue it. This imbalance is seen in Eun unconventional behaviour in their relationship, such as going on a vacation with another man without permission and updates. Besides the textual elements in the movie, MHA perception is influenced by his experiences and knowledge about toxic relationship. In early 2022, he was in a relationship with a girl who had double standards and manipulative behaviour. For instance, his girlfriend demanded respect from other people but did not want to reciprocate it. He also heard stories from his female stories about her partners who were not respectful towards his partners by acting friendly towards other women.

GV as a second informant also sees that Jeong-U is “foolish” for allowing himself to be deceived by Eun. This can be seen from Jeong-U's willingness to sacrifice his heart as a proof of love to his girlfriend. In GV's view, Eun is toxic due to being manipulative and harming her partner. Hence, GV perceives that Jeong-U's actions are not wrong. This perspective is derived from GV experience in a toxic relationship, where his partner's manipulative behaviour led him to feel guilty for the actions he didn't commit. This aligns with the some characteristics of toxic relationships such as gaslighting and crazy-making, as well as blaming the victim instead of acknowledging one's own faults (Suchyo, 2022). In addition to personal experience, GV also encountered instances through his female friend's partner, who prioritized spending time with an opposite-sex friend. GV regards such behaviour as toxic because she has experienced being cheated on by a former partner.

RS, the third informant, agrees that Jeong-U's behaviour is foolish because he tries to sustain the relationship without setting boundaries with Eun. Jeong-U is aware of numerous red flags from Eun that should be noted. Ultimately, Eun exploits this by behaving recklessly, asserting control over the relationship. This behaviour includes going on vacations with other men, engaging in intimate actions, and so on. RS view aligns with the data that indicates many victims stay in toxic relationships due to uncertainty and fear of leaving. RS's perception may come from witnessing relationships where the woman dominates and the man lacks assertiveness. Apart from his knowledge, his religious and cultural values strengthen his belief that such actions are unacceptable. As a Christian in Indonesia, he follows Eastern culture.

ATL, the fourth informant, holds a similar perspective. ATL sees Jeong-U's behaviour as foolish for continuing the relationship despite their lack of compatibility. This mismatch is attributed to differing perceptions about their relationship dynamic. ATL arrives at this conclusion through several scenes where Jeong-U expresses emotions in a white room after hearing Eun's stories. For instance, the scene where Jeong-U's head is decapitated, he throws a chair, and others. Despite not experiencing a toxic relationship, ATL's perception may stem

from stories of unhealthy relationships shared by his female friend. He frequently heard his friend complaining about unresolved issues due to different problem-solving approaches, resulting in a lack of appreciation and negative talk about her partner to ATL.

DISCUSSION

From the gathered data, informant receptions can be categorized into three types based on Stuart Hall audience reception analysis theory: dominant-hegemonic position, negotiated position, and oppositional position. Their reception of the messages is influenced by contextual factors such as cultural background, education, gender, age, experience, and knowledge (Jensen, 2002).

The results of their receptions indicate that there are two major categories of data that can be classified from the informants' responses. The first is related to the form of obsession in relationships. In this aspect, MHA, who have experienced toxic relationships, occupies the negotiated position. He views Jeong-U's obsession with Eun as evidenced by his behaviour of inquiring about Eun's well-being. However, Eun is also at fault for not communicating her updates to Jeong-U. GV, as a survivor of a toxic relationship, holds the dominant hegemonic position towards this aspect. Yet, she perceives the obsessive behaviour to originate from Eun, who seeks to accumulate affection from various men.

RS, who hasn't experienced toxic relationships, adopts the oppositional position due to Jeong-U's lack of initiative in seeking Eun and his emotional control when Eun disappears to an island with another man. Conversely, ATL, another non-survivor of toxic relationships, assumes the dominant hegemonic position concerning the theme of obsession within relationships. ATL notices Jeong-U's obsessive behaviour, particularly his willingness to end his engagement for a younger and more attractive woman.

The second category pertains to the foolish due to obsessive love. MHA, the first informant, holds the dominant hegemonic position, meaning he positively accepts the message from the media. He evaluates that Jeong-U's foolishness is evident in his attempt to force love on Eun to the point of sacrificing himself by giving his heart. Despite Jeong-U's awareness that the relationship is imbalanced, he still strives to maintain it. GV, the second informant, perceives Jeong-U as unwise for being willing to sacrifice his heart to prove his love. However, GV attributes this foolishness entirely to Eun, who exploits Jeong-U's love to achieve her own desires.

RS, the third informant, views Jeong-U as not wise either, as he chooses to persist in the relationship despite numerous red flags. Additionally, Jeong-U's lack of setting clear boundaries allows Eun to dominate and control the relationship. Similarly, ATL, the fourth informant, also regards Jeong-U's behaviour as foolish because he chose to continue the relationship despite their different perceptions. For instance, Jeong-U cannot accept Eun's open relationship style, yet Eun also perceives Jeong-U as uncool without expressing it. In the end, there is no solution to the problem between them.

This analysis aligns with the statements of Christy Maria Sucahyo, the author of the book "Toxic Relationship Free: Ketika Hubungan Meracuni Masa Depan, Apa yang Harus Dilakukan?" and the Founder of Komunitas Pacaran Sehat. Christy clarifies that obsessiveness

has the potential to be categorized within the spectrum about toxicity, as it is connected to anxious preoccupied attachment. This level of obsessiveness consumes one's thoughts and time to an extent where they develop illusions about the person due to being preoccupied.

Consequently, there are behaviours that lead to obsessive submission, where the person who is obsessed will comply with and agree to any actions desired by their partner, even if these actions lack ethical or moral grounding. They may even be willing to make personal sacrifices to validate their affection. There are also behaviours that lead to an obsessive form of control, which can steer someone toward toxic behaviours that are controlling, such as lie, dishonesty, possessiveness, aggressiveness, and even manipulation.

Understanding that manipulative conduct can distort an individual's cognition or sense of reality is crucial. This distortion makes it hard for them to distinguish between right and wrong. The victim no longer has self-awareness when making certain decisions and can't think clearly because their mind is being controlled by their partner. Consequently, branding manipulated individuals as "foolish" is unfair since their reality has been manipulated rather than lacking intelligence. Instead, their actions are seen as sacrifices and proof of love for their partner. However, if the victim insists on staying despite being shown evidence, only then can their actions be considered foolish or unwise, as emotions are controlling them more than logic. For that reason, every couple needs communication to establish clear boundaries in their relationship. If these boundaries are frequently violated and become a pattern, the relationship can be characterized as toxic.

Because of that, three out of four informants agree that Jeong-U behaviour is categorized as foolish action. This assessment from his persistent efforts to maintain the relationship at the cost of sacrificing himself and his hesitancy to set clear boundaries with Eun. Even though Jeong-U is aware that their relationship is already unhealthy. But another informant perspective, labelling Jeong-U as foolish because derives from Eun manipulative behaviour and exploits him to fulfill her obsessive tendencies about man's love, which are indicative of toxic behaviour.

Hence, every couple needs to establish distinct boundaries within their relationship. These boundaries can be developed as the relationship progresses, whether that be after three months, six months, or even a year. If there are behaviours that make each other uncomfortable, couples can set that as boundaries. Open and transparent communication from both sides is essential to determine what is acceptable and what is not. When these boundaries are consistently repeated and become a pattern, it is an indication of a toxic relationship. The absence of boundaries can result in various problems within romantic relationships, considering that everyone has their own perception about relationships. Similarly, like the informant observation that the character Eun in the television episode exhibits greater freedom and broader limits compared to Jeong-U.

Based on the outcomes of this data analysis, it becomes evident that there exists a convergence between the toxic relationship concept and the informant's perspective. The informants perceive that Jeong-U's behaviour is foolish because he strives to maintain the relationship because of love and obsession. But, Eun exploits this affection to manipulate and establish control over Jeong-U. This aligns with the toxic relationship concept which involves

an unhealthy relationship characterized by various destructive behaviours like verbal, non-verbal, or physical actions aimed at controlling the partner because of negative emotions.

However, it is evident that each informant has their own perception of media messages, influenced by several factors like cultural background, field of experience, and frame of reference for each individual. This research reveals that their acceptance of the messages is influenced by their own experience, stories from other people about toxic relationships, diverse knowledge, beliefs, and gender. This is why people can perceive messages from mass media differently, even if the messages are presented in a certain way (Moerdijati, 2016).

This theory is proven by RS and ATL who have different perceptions of the data findings about “Forms of Obsession in Relationships”, with RS has an oppositional position and ATL has a dominant position. In the case of “Foolish Due to Obsessive Love”, they both have a dominant position. But They offer distinct views and reasons regarding Jeong-U's foolishness in his relationship with Eun, despite never having experienced a toxic relationship before.

As for MHA and GV, their interpretations of the two sets of data may diverge due to differences in their field of experience, frame of reference on toxic relationships, and gender. Gender also plays a significant role in shaping their thought processes, even though both MHA and GV have experienced toxic relationships. Typically, women tend to provide intricate explanations and perspectives influenced by their emotions, whereas men's reactions tend to be less detailed, emotionally detached, and expressed in a broader viewpoint (Wahidar & Reswari, 2021).

Hence, MHA as a male, tends to have objective perception that is unaffected by emotions, thus enabling him to see the situation from both sides, even as a survivor. On the other hand, GV as a female, tends to express opinions based on emotions, which impacts her interpretations about the message. Her experience as a survivor triggers emotional reactions when witnessing Jeong-U's foolishness because he is manipulated by Eun.

However, in terms of age, the audience's perceptions about messages from the movie are quite similar, particularly regarding forms of obsession in relationships and foolish due to obsessive love. All four informants have an age range of 20-30 years, where they tend to build more serious relationships such as marriage. Therefore, they can see Jeong-U's foolishness through his decisions within the relationship, albeit for different reasons. Thus, it can be seen that age can not always be the basis for influencing the audience's perspective. (Wahidar & Reswari, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis above, it's evident that each informant has a different interpretation of the message conveyed in “Persona: Collector” television episode. This indicates that mass media plays an important role in transmitting messages and exchanging meanings. Movie is a one of mass media that is embraced by the public thus it can be used to convey the messages contained within it. This objective aligns with the mass media functions

such as an informative, entertaining, persuasive platform, and others. Through these functions, each informant believes that the issue of a toxic relationship is important to be addressed in mass media, for example, through films. By doing so, the public can become more aware of the forms and characteristics of toxic relationships.

The evidence can be seen from diverse receptions of messages of toxic relationships in the “Persona: Collector” television episode. Notably, not all participants concurred with the messages that presented. For instance, MHA situated in the negotiated position, and RS in the oppositional position in the category “Form of Obsession in Relationships”. In contrast, GV assessed in the negotiated position on the “Foolish due to Obsessive Love”. This divergence can happen because the interpretation of each informant is influenced by their respective cultural backgrounds, beliefs, experiences, and knowledge. Thus, not all informants immediately agree with the messages present in the film.

To sum up, mass media holds a crucial role in communicating messages and facilitating the exchange of meanings. Among the various forms of mass media, movie stands out as a favoured choice across all social strata and making it an effective medium to transmitting embedded messages. However, it’s important to keep in mind that every informant has a distinct interpretation of the messages because of their individual cultural contexts, beliefs, life experience, and knowledge.

Researcher hope there will be further studies that can continue or improve research on toxic relationship in the “Persona: Collector” television episode. For example, using semiotic methods to analyze how toxic relationships are depicted or using quantitative content analysis methods to compare similar movies from Indonesia or other countries. Additionally, researcher anticipate the continuation of studies aimed at analyzing audience reception regarding toxic relationships in another movie, including documentaries featuring Johnny Depp and Amber Heard. This is because the topic of toxic relationships, especially from female to male, remains relatively unexplored in mass media and warrants further examination. Researcher recommend selecting informants with more diverse backgrounds to add depth and intrigue to the research findings.

Not only that, researcher aspire that readers to recognize and develop sensitivity towards the reality that every individual comes with varying cultural backgrounds, ages, life experiences, and levels of knowledge. These differences inevitably influence their interpretation towards messages in the media, making it challenging for the researcher to analysis accurately of their interpretations. Additionally, the researcher emphasizes the significance of featuring content of media productions that explicitly address the topic of relationships.

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