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Implementation of 'Ruth and Naomi' Interpersonal Communication as a Model in Avoiding Toxic Relationship

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Abstract

This paper aims to describe Ruth and Naomi's interpersonal communication as a model for avoiding toxic relationships. This research is a qualitative descriptive study by exploring the communication texts between Ruth and Naomi in the book of Ruth and implementing them as a form of interpersonal communication to avoid toxic relationships. Based on the results of the discussion of the five dialogues of Ruth and Naomi in the book of Ruth, it was found that four techniques can be implemented in interpersonal communication to avoid toxic relationships. The four techniques are the stop-the-thought Technique, the direct-confront Technique, the give-them-hell-and-yell Technique, and the give-them-love-and-kindness.

1. Introduction

Interpersonal communication is a determining factor in creating meaningful and healthy interpersonal relationships (Awi et al., 2012, 2). Healthy communication can be the paste of relationships, encouraging finding interpersonal solutions so that the relationship quality can be maintained and the parties communicating get easier and have many relationships (Cangara, 2003, 61). Communication relationships are one of the drivers of changes in one's attitudes and actions. However, if the communication is excessive, does not support each other, views each other as having a negative impact on each other's lives, and much more (Yulita et al., 2021, 8738). This is described as a toxic relationship because it can drain time and thought, has a bad influence on physical and mental health, and can affect social interactions in a person. As reported by Forbes magazine, in the USA alone, 84% of women and 75% of Pira reported that they were in a toxic relationship, the policies

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of which were marked by manipulation, feeling bad about themselves, judgmental, negative personal and selfish or in other words only selfish. Themselves (Beheshti, 2020).

In Indonesia, the Annual Records (Catahu) of the National Commission (Komnas) Anti-Violence Against Women 2021, cases in the private/personal sphere as many as 1,404 cases or equivalent to 65% (ANNUAL NOTES ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, 2021). Ruth's book contains much interpersonal communication to be used as a model to avoid toxic relationships. Dialogue dominates the book of Ruth (Schipper, 2016, 52). Dialogue and conversation are characteristic of Ruth's book; even half of Ruth's book is dialogue and personal conversation (Fuerst, 1975:13). Reflecting on the relationship between Ruth and Naomi. Even though Naomi asked Ruth to return to her people after Elimelech's death, Ruth chose to stay with Naomi. Relationships are based on candor and commitment between the two parties. Ruth and Naomi's interpersonal communication can be used as a model for avoiding toxic relationships.

2. Materials and Methods

This paper is based on descriptive qualitative research, namely library research. Literature can be in the form of books and journal articles relevant to the discussion in writing. It aims to explain the implementation of interpersonal communication between Ruth and Naomi as a model to avoid toxic relationships. In the current paper, the researcher will combine the opinions of experts and researchers through the readings and describe various relevant sources.

Interpersonal Communication Theory

The theory that fits this topic is interpersonal communication theory. The things analyzed in this study are Ruth and Naomi as models in overcoming toxic relationships, starting from the personal communication behavior of Ruth and Naomi to finally analyzing the relationship between the two. In communication, three things are analyzed first centered on the individual, which gives a view of what is called the rational nature of the individual and ensures the uncertainty of the individual's nature (Horstman & Dougherty, n.d.). As with an attribution, through attribution can be found the reason for an act of communication. Attribution is also the reason for actions and results, how communication affects the point of view of other individuals, and how to respond to other individuals through the communication itself.

Furthermore, what is analyzed in a communication centered on interaction or what is commonly called discourse, is usually associated with giving each other action or as an example of an exchange of affection because, in the act of affection, both sincerely and manipulation, in that action, it increases trust, closeness, and relational satisfaction (Floyd, 2016, 2). The last thing to analyze is centered on the relationship between individuals themselves. Resilience in communication also needs to be tested. Resilience is meant for humans as the ability to get back up after a harrowing journey in life. The desired impact of this ability is to maintain and use communication networks, promote positive emotions, and eliminate negative thoughts (Buzzanell & Houston, 2017, 2). In the end, it will be seen how beliefs about communication, attitudes towards behavior, beliefs in normative, subjective norms, belief control, and perceived attitude control, in turn, will lead to intentions and produce attitudes when communicating (Fishbein & Thurow, 2019).

Literature Review

The more developed the current situation, the more it affects the communication relationship with each other. Toxic relationships are only between individuals, such as two people who need control or the sarcastic type. In other words, the combination of the relationship is the wrong combination (Glass, 1995). Toxic relationships are also usually supported by certain factors that cause individuals who have toxic relationships to still depend on each other. These supporting factors increase dynamic communication (Rinaldi, 1996, 10). Communication has become a mandatory interaction that makes every human being connected, and continuous contact occurs. Interpersonal communication woven by each individual will shape how their communication attitude. Communication attitudes with low self-control and uncontrolled emotions often lead to toxic relationships that significantly impact individual personal development (Praptiningsih & Putra, 2021, 140).

Negative communication that causes toxic relationships threatens the mental health of individuals. Positive communication is needed to overcome this toxic relationship. Many psychological strategies and communication strategies are expressed in overcoming this. However, it is still not effective enough in reducing the number of toxic relationships. This paper contains a new strategy by placing Ruth and Naomi as models for avoiding toxic relationships. In the biblical view, communication is one of the essential human activities we do daily. God has created us as creatures who regularly and continually engage in and interpret communication (Keener & McCain, 2017). In a book entitled *"Understanding The Bible"* by Dorothy L. Johns, it is explained that:

> *"A composition combines several parts to make one thing out of them, a whole. A composition may be a painting, a musical work, poetry, or written language. Whatever the composition, it will express unity. It will have a beginning, middle, and end. If it is a piece of art, it will have several parts that all merge to form a unit. The composition of words must communicate thoughts. God gave man language. Language's order, arrangement, and principles make communication possible. Each language's order may differ from other languages (Johns, 2009, 108)".*

Through the quote above, it can be understood that individuals are met in various ways, and of course, it starts with communication. With the communication given by God, humans are expected to think more carefully when communicating. As already explained, although every language is different still has a sequence, starting with positive communication. All communication is based on the assumption that the person speaking will be understood by the person listening or reading. This is what God meant. He did not attempt to hide His message. One of the excellent communication strategies is to be frank because belief must be tested by whether giving words will produce ordinary meaning or not. Through the sources that have been explored, no source focuses on this topic, namely making Rut and Naomi the model of communication behavior in avoiding toxic relationships. The obtained sources mainly discussed how God's faithful love was through Ruth's faithfulness, none of which discussed how the gift of communication was given to Ruth in building a good and faithful relationship with her mother-in-law Naomi. Therefore, this paper discussed the relationship between Ruth and Naomi's behavior as an example of avoiding toxic relationships.

3. Results and Discussions

According to Glass, several important points are the Technique in handling toxic relationships, including;

> *"The Tension-Blowout Technique, The Humor Technique, The Stop-the-Thought Technique, The Mirror Technique, The Direct-Confront Technique, The Calm Questioning Technique, The Give-Them-Hell-and-Yell Technique, The Give-Them-Love-and-Kindness Technique, The Vicarious-Fantasy Technique, The Unplug Technique" (Glass, 1995, 118).*

The Technique that will be used in understanding the topic "Rut and Naomi as the model of communication behavior in avoiding toxic relationships" consists of four points: The Stop-the-Thought Technique, The Direct-Confront Technique, The Give-Them-Love-and -Kindness Technique, and The Give-Them-Hell-and-Yell Technique. The Bible contains various interpersonal and communal conversations that can be used as models to support the formation of healthy relationships between individuals. One of them is the conversation between Ruth and Naomi which is recorded in the book of Ruth. According to Tull, the Book of Ruth records more conversations between women than 29, and 8 are dialogues between women and women (Tull, 2003, 54).

1. Dialogue of Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah (Ruth 1:8-13)
2. Naomi's dialogue with the women in the city (Ruth 1:19-21; 4:14-17)
3. Naomi's Dialogue with Ruth (Ruth 1:15-18; 2:2; 2:19-22; 3:1-5 and 3:16-18)

In the third part, Naomi and Ruth's dialogue, Naomi and Ruth's communication behavior will be explored, which can be used as a model to avoid toxic relationships and create harmonious interpersonal relationships.

First Dialogue, Ruth 1:15-18

The context of the first dialogue takes place on the journey back to Judah from the land of Moab. Along the way, Naomi gave orders to Orpah and Ruth to return to their homes and hometowns. Ruth's words to Naomi, "Do not urge me to leave you," in Ruth 1:16, according to Schipper, is a form of Ruth's request to Naomi not to put pressure or coercion into leaving Naomi (Schipper, 2016, 48). The command to leave Naomi has been given repeatedly (1:8,11,15) with the formula "go home ."Because it was repeated so many times, this command became a pressure that weighed on Ruth. Therefore Ruth responded frankly by answering Naomi, "do not press me to leave you and go home by not following you ."This resistance from Ruth can be categorized as The Give-Them-Hell-and-Yell technique, and the direct/confront Technique (Glass, 1995, 194), where Ruth tries to challenge Naomi's opinion and provide a new perspective directly. For Naomi, it was best for Ruth to go home to her family, but for Ruth, it was best to follow Naomi.

The Give-Them-Hell-and-Yell technique is emphasized by Ruth's convincing arguments that show the sincerity of her decision. Schipper argues that Ruth's statement in 1:16b-17 is a model of an oath in the form of poetry delivered with appropriate emotional intensity, showing her inner feelings effectively and frankly to allow Naomi to understand the depth of Ruth's determination (Schipper, 2016, 51). Ruth's direct/confront Technique causes Naomi to stop talking (Ruth 1:18). Tull argues that Naomi answered Ruth's words with silence. Naomi's meaning of silence is incomprehensible, whether she accepts Ruth's loyalty or anger because Ruth makes different choices (Tull, 2003, 56). However, according to Glass, one Technique to overcome toxic relationships is to stop thinking negative things. In the context of Naomi and Ruth's dialogue (1: 8, 11, 12, 15), silence is one example of the Technique for stopping negative thinking because Naomi does not insist on forcing Ruth to take the same attitude as Orpah (Glass, 1995). Rachel (Moon, 2022) silence or silence can be used to train oneself to be a better person. In other words, silence is an important skill to apply to other individuals.

One of the goals of communication is to change attitudes (Liliweri, 2017), which is done by influencing and convincing others to have the same thoughts as the communicator. Naomi's acceptance of Ruth's wishes was based on Ruth's persuasive communication accompanied by a statement of commitment. Ruth managed to change the attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and desires of Naomi to command Ruth to return to her people through persuasive communication. Ruth's statement in 1:16-17 is a statement of commitment, where you go there I will also go, where you stay the night I will also spend the night, your people are my people, your God is my God, where you die there I will die and be buried. Duguid states that Ruth's commitment is a culminating commitment to the end of life (Duguid, 2005, 149).

Second and Third Dialogue, Ruth 2:2; 2:19-22

The context of the second dialogue is when Naomi and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem. In Ruth 2:2, it is recorded, "So Ruth the Moabite woman said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and gather grain behind the man who was kind to me." Moreover, Naomi said to him, "Go away, my son." Hubbard argues that Ruth made an unexpected statement, which is not found in the dialogue along the way to Bethlehem (Hubbard, 1988, 136). "Let me go" is a sentence used by a subordinate to a superior. The sentence shows Ruth's respect for Naomi, and Ruth needs Naomi's permission as her mother-in-law. She does not make decisions alone.

Furthermore, Lawson Carson stated that Ruth's love for Naomi was limitless, so Naomi loved Ruth and treated her as a child (Carson & Lawson, 2001, 42). With a short answer, Naomi agreed, "go, my son ."Conversations that are soothing and show affection, appreciation for Naomi as an older woman, and protection for Ruth as a younger woman (Tull, 2003, 64). Communication that shows affection and kindness is a love and kindness technique (Glass, 1995).

What Ruth did to find food was asked by Naomi in the afternoon 'where do you work and where do you gather? Ruth gave the broadest possible information on what was asked by Naomi. Even Ruth explained the contents of her conversation with Boaz frankly; nothing was hidden. Lawson & Carson (Carson & Lawson, 2001, 48) stated that the conversation is between family members whose hearts are bound together by love. Naomi's question is a form of parenting responsibility, and Ruth's answer is proof of love for Naomi so that for Ruth, there is nothing to keep secret from what she does.

Ruth's frankness with Naomi also determines the success of their interpersonal relationship. Again, this context found the direct and comfort Technique (Glass, 1995). Rut explained directly what she experienced to Naomi. The feedback from Ruth's frankness to Naomi was that Naomi gave Ruth a wise suggestion on what to do next, "My son, you better go out with the female workers so that you will not be troubled by people in other fields (2:22), these words are proof of Naomi's great love for Ruth by advising so that Ruth does not get unfavorable treatment from the surrounding environment (Schipper, 2016, 178).

Fourth and fifth dialogue, Ruth 3:1-5; Ruth 3:16-18

Naomi thought about what was best for Ruth and wanted Ruth to get more than just the grains of barley in the field. For Naomi, Ruth's happiness is the main thing, and to make this happen, Naomi gives Ruth a suggestion starting with the question, 'Is it not good for me to find a shelter for you so that you are happy? Naomi's words portend a better future for Ruth (Ferguson, 2005, 94). This question shows the Technique of love and kindness, but according to Naomi, what is good is not necessarily a good thing for Ruth. Therefore it is necessary to ask Ruth to get the answer. If someone advises someone close to him, it is necessary to consider whether that person has the same point of

view (Carson & Lawson, 2001, 58). Naomi hoped that Ruth's suggestion would be accepted, so Naomi gave clear steps that Ruth had to take.

Ruth responded positively by saying, "whatever you say, I will do" (Ruth 3:5). Naomi's explanations create a shared understanding so that although the work to be carried out has risks, the common understanding does not create a conflict between the two. Ruth voluntarily carried out the strategy that Naomi had arranged. In the fifth dialogue of Ruth 3:16-18, Naomi asks Ruth the outcome of her conversation with Boaz and whether it goes as she suggests. Ruth recounted her entire conversation with Boaz, showing evidence of the six measures of barley that Boaz had given her. For Naomi, this was a testament to the goodness of Boaz (Ferguson, 2005,114) that she had shown Ruth, but efforts were still needed to realize this kindness; therefore, Naomi gave Ruth the advice again, sitting there waiting for the good they had hoped for to come true.

4. Conclusion

Based on the five dialogues of Ruth and Naomi, it is found that there is communication that influences each other so that both have the same thought. The same thinking is shown by a change in behavior, both through words and actions. The same thought is one strategy to avoid toxic relationships obtained through The Give-Them-Hell-and-Yell Technique, where Rut opposes Naomi's opinion. Ruth and Naomi's dialogue also shows the existence of The Stop-the-Thought Technique because Ruth's resistance causes Naomi to remain silent and accepts Ruth's opinion by allowing her to come with him to Bethlehem.

In the interaction in the city of Bethlehem, Ruth and Naomi's communication showed mutual love and kindness (The Give-Them-Love-and-Kindness Technique), as well as directness and openness (The Direct-Confront Technique), kindness, understanding, and honesty. There is no unclear, silly goal as is usually applied in a toxic relationship. There is also no desire from Ruth or Naomi to break up as daughter-in-law and in-laws. Therefore, it can be concluded that the interpersonal communication relationship between Ruth and Naomi should be used as a model for avoiding toxic relationships.

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