

Overcoming Toxic Relationships Through the Spirituality of Mahabbah as Taught by Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah

Nikmatu Sholihah Nur Amanda¹ , Kanzai Abdillah² 

¹UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, Indonesia

²STKQ Al Hikam Depok, Jawa Barat, Indonesia

*Correspondence Author: nikmatussholihah212@gmail.com

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Abstract: *The phenomenon of toxic relationships among the younger generation indicates that love is still often understood as possession, control, possessiveness, and emotional dependence; therefore, a spiritual foundation is needed to guide relationships toward greater health and dignity. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a field research design supplemented by a literature review. Primary data were collected through semi-structured written interviews with five students aged 18–25 via WhatsApp in July 2026, while secondary data were derived from relevant academic literature. The data were analyzed through condensation, presentation, and the derivation and verification of conclusions. This study aims to: 1) analyze early-adult students' understanding of healthy relationships and toxic relationships; 2) examine the concept of mahabbah from the perspective of Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah; and 3) explain the relevance of the value of mahabbah as the basis for spiritual education in building healthy relationships. The results indicate that healthy relationships are grounded in trust, communication, respect, a sense of security, honesty, and mutual support. In contrast, toxic relationships are characterized by possessiveness, control, manipulation, verbal abuse, and emotional dependence. Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's concept of mahabbah is relevant as a spiritual foundation for cultivating a love that is divine, non-transactional, sincere, mindful of boundaries, non-dominating, and respectful of human dignity.*

Keywords: Mahabbah; Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah; Toxic Relationships

Introduction

Human relationships in the modern era are becoming increasingly complex. Relationships that were originally intended to be spaces for mutual support, respect, and a sense of security do not always function healthily in practice. Ideally, a healthy relationship can be understood as one built on trust, open communication, emotional closeness, empathy, respect for personal boundaries, and the ability of both parties to help each other grow. Trust, open communication, emotional connection, and mutual respect are essential elements in building healthy relationships ([Brar dkk.,](#)

[2023](#)). Additionally, the ability to listen actively and empathetically is also a key factor in building healthy romantic relationships in early adulthood ([Utami dkk., 2024](#)).

One of the most discussed phenomena in contemporary social life is the toxic relationship. This term refers to an unhealthy relationship pattern characterized by emotional manipulation, excessive control, codependency, verbal abuse, and disregard for one's self-respect. In the literature, this phenomenon can be understood through the concepts of intimate partner violence and dating violence. Intimate partner violence is understood as violence or aggression within a romantic relationship. Toxic relationships cannot be viewed merely as ordinary conflicts within a relationship, but rather as relational patterns that have the potential to damage an individual's psychological, social, and moral well-being.

The phenomenon of toxic relationships reveals that love in modern human relationships lies not only in the presence of conflict but also in how an individual interprets love itself. In many cases, the line between love and possessiveness becomes blurred. Attention can turn into control, care can shift into domination, while sacrifice is often misunderstood as a willingness to endure a harmful relationship. Possessive behavior is often seen as proof of sincerity, excessive jealousy is interpreted as a sign of love, and staying in a harmful relationship is viewed as a form of loyalty. Dating violence is also linked to emotional dependence among college students, so unhealthy relationships are often maintained not only because of love, but also because of emotional dependence ([Castillo-González dkk., 2024](#)).

This crisis in the meaning of love must be understood not only from psychological and social perspectives but also from the perspectives of values and spirituality. When love is detached from a values-based orientation, it can transform into a drive to possess, control, demand, and even inflict harm. In fact, healthy love should bring about peace, respect, responsibility, an awareness of one's own boundaries, and the ability to uphold one's own dignity as well as that of others. Therefore, a perspective is needed that can restore love to a clearer meaning—not merely as an emotion, but also as an inner awareness that guides humans to love rightly and with dignity.

In Islamic tradition, particularly in Sufism, love is understood not only as a human emotion but also as a spiritual path to purify the heart, control the ego, and draw closer to Allah. The concept of love in Sufism is known as mahabbah a love that guides people toward sincerity, awareness, devotion, and the liberation of the soul from excessive attachment to anything other than Allah ([Mustamin, 2020](#)). Love is also a central theme in early Sufi literature through the terms “hubb” and “mahabbah,” which position Allah as the Divine Beloved and humanity as seekers of love. Within this framework, “mahabbah” can serve as a conceptual foundation for reinterpreting love so that it does not descend into destructive forms of attachment.

One of the most well-known Sufi figures in discussions of mahabbah is Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah. She is known as a female Sufi from Basra who placed love for Allah at the center of her spiritual life. Rabi'ah presented a distinctive style of Sufism by emphasizing sincere divine love, rather than worship driven solely by fear of hell or hope for paradise. Rabi'ah's mystical poems explore themes of divine love, spiritual longing, and total surrender to Allah ([Akmalia, 2025](#)). Rabi'ah's mahabbah is also understood as a state in which love is directed solely toward Allah, so that nothing is more remembered, longed for, or loved than Him ([Abitolkha & Muvid, 2021](#)). This perspective demonstrates that Rabi'ah's mahabbah is not a transactional love, but rather a love that purifies the heart of self-interest, self-serving motives, and selfishness.

Previous studies on Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah have generally focused on mahabbah as a concept of divine love within the Sufi tradition, mystical poetry, and the spiritual experiences of Sufis ([Suciana & Encung, 2025](#)). Meanwhile, studies on toxic relationships are more commonly discussed from the perspectives of psychology,

interpersonal communication, dating violence, and emotional dependence ([Castillo-González dkk., 2024](#)). Both areas of study are equally important, yet they are rarely brought together in a single framework that connects Sufi values with the issue of healthy relationships among the younger generation. This is the research gap addressed by this study: presenting Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's mahabbah as the foundation of spiritual education to help early-adult students interpret, critically analyze, and guide their understanding of love, healthy relationships, and toxic relationships.

Based on this research gap, this article offers a novel approach by positioning Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's mahabbah as the foundation of spiritual education in fostering healthy relationships. This article does not intend to equate Rabi'ah's mahabbah with romantic love, as mahabbah in Rabi'ah's thought remains rooted in divine love. However, the spiritual values contained within it can be applied to critique patterns of love that are manipulative, possessive, transactional, and destructive to self-worth. Thus, this article seeks to broaden the interpretation of "mahabbah" from merely a Sufi concept toward an ethical-spiritual contribution to the formation of healthy relationships.

Based on this discussion, this article focuses on three main issues: 1) how young adult students understand healthy relationships and toxic relationships, 2) the concept of mahabbah from the perspective of Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah, and 3) the relevance of Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's values of mahabbah as a foundation for spiritual education in building healthy relationships. This article aims to analyze early-adult students' understanding of healthy relationships and toxic relationships, to analyze the concept of mahabbah from the perspective of Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah, and to analyze the relevance of Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's concept of mahabbah as a foundation for spiritual education in building healthy relationships.

Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a field research design supplemented by a literature review. This approach was chosen because the study seeks to understand how early-adult students interpret healthy and toxic relationships and to interpret these through the concept of mahabbah from the perspective of Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah. Qualitative research emphasizes the process, meaning, and understanding of subjects' experiences within a specific context ([Malahati dkk., 2023](#)). Therefore, this approach is relevant for exploring informants' understanding of healthy relationships, toxic relationships, and spiritual values in building healthier relationships.

This study was conducted online using written interviews via WhatsApp with early-adult students in July 2026. The online method was chosen because the informants were located in different places; thus, written interviews were deemed more flexible for exploring the informants' understanding of healthy relationships, toxic relationships, and the role of religious values or spirituality in building relationships. Although conducted online, the data collection process was guided by open-ended questions to ensure the informants' responses aligned with the study's focus.

The research subjects were five students aged 18–25 who were selected through purposive sampling because they were in the early adulthood phase and had a close connection to issues of healthy relationships, toxic relationships, and the dynamics of social relationships in daily life. The research focused on the students' understanding of healthy and toxic relationships, as well as the relevance of Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's concept of mahabbah as a foundation for spiritual education in building healthy relationships. Purposive sampling was used to select participants

deemed to possess knowledge, experience, or relevance to the research focus ([Campbell dkk., 2020](#)).

The data sources for this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from the informants' written responses to six open-ended questions regarding healthy relationships, toxic relationships, factors that cause individuals to remain in unhealthy relationships, the meaning of healthy love, and the importance of religious values or spirituality in building relationships. Secondary data were obtained through a literature review of journal articles, books, and academic documents discussing Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's concept of mahabbah, the Sufism of love, healthy relationships, toxic relationships, emotional dependence, dating violence, and intimate partner violence. A literature review can be used to examine, evaluate, and synthesize knowledge that has developed within a field of study.

The primary research instrument was the researcher, assisted by a set of open-ended questions and literature notes. Data collection techniques included semi-structured written interviews and literature documentation. Written interviews were used to obtain primary data from informants. In contrast, literature review was used to trace and classify academic sources relevant to Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's concept of mahabbah, healthy relationships, toxic relationships, emotional dependence, dating violence, and intimate partner violence. Document analysis can be used in qualitative research to systematically understand written data ([Bowen, 2009](#)).

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, specifically by comparing informants' responses with relevant academic literature. Additionally, data reliability is maintained by selecting credible, relevant sources that align with the research focus. Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative content analysis is crucial to ensure the data interpretation process is accountable ([Elo dkk., 2014](#)). Informants' identities were anonymized using the codes I1, I2, I3, I4, and I5 to protect data confidentiality and ensure the data is used solely for academic purposes.

The data analysis technique employed the Miles model, specifically data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification ([Miles dkk., 2020](#)). Data condensation was conducted by selecting, focusing, simplifying, and organizing the informants' responses as well as relevant literature about the research focus. Data display was carried out by grouping the findings into the themes of healthy relationships, toxic relationships, the meaning of healthy love, factors for persevering in unhealthy relationships, and the role of spiritual values. Conclusion drawing/verification was conducted interpretatively by linking field findings and literature reviews through Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's concept of mahabbah as the basis for spiritual education in building healthy relationships.

Result and Discussion

Result

1. Early-Adult Students' Understanding of Healthy and Toxic Relationships

The research findings indicate that early-adult college students understand healthy relationships as those built on mutual trust, mutual respect, good communication, honesty, support, comfort, and respect for personal boundaries. Healthy relationships are understood not only as emotionally close bonds but also as relationships that do not harm either party and allow each person space to be themselves. Several informants stated,

"In my opinion, a healthy relationship is one where two people can trust and respect each other and communicate well. In such a relationship, a person does not feel pressured or restricted by the other party. A healthy

relationship actually makes a person feel comfortable, valued, and able to remain true to themselves” (W-I¹/2026)

“In my opinion, a healthy relationship is one characterized by mutual respect, trust, support, and honesty. Such a relationship does not make either party feel disadvantaged. Instead, each person can encourage the other and help them become a better person” (W-I³/2026)

The concept of a healthy relationship is also evident in the informants' responses, which emphasize the importance of feeling safe and having the freedom to be oneself within a relationship. One informant stated that a healthy relationship provides comfort, does not instill fear, and does not make a person feel judged; another informant added,

“A healthy relationship is one where a person can feel comfortable being themselves without fear or judgment. In such a relationship, a person doesn't have to pretend just to be accepted by their partner. In my opinion, a healthy relationship should provide a sense of security and help a person grow, not make them feel pressured.” (W-I⁴/2026)

In a relationship like this, there is mutual trust, support, and encouragement to become a better person. These findings indicate that a healthy relationship is understood as a space for personal growth, not merely a connection based on attraction or emotional closeness. On the other hand, informants perceive a toxic relationship as one characterized by possessiveness, excessive control, manipulation, verbal abuse, quick temper, belittling one's partner, a lack of mutual trust, and a failure to respect personal boundaries. The third informant stated,

“In my opinion, a toxic relationship is evident in possessive behavior, frequent micromanagement, short temper, and a tendency to belittle one's partner. A relationship like this makes a person feel restricted because they are overly controlled. If left unchecked, such a relationship can cause someone to feel stressed and lose their sense of comfort.” (W-I³/2026)

Research findings indicate that early-adult college students can recognize toxic relationships through physical abuse, excessive control, emotional pressure, demeaning communication, possessive behavior, suspicion, and restrictions on their partner's activities. The informants' experiences and knowledge reinforce this understanding, even though not all of them witnessed these behaviors firsthand. Furthermore, it is difficult for someone to leave an unhealthy relationship because they still feel affection, hope that their partner will change, fear losing them, have become accustomed to the relationship dynamics, and experience emotional dependence. Even after being repeatedly harmed, victims often continue to believe that the relationship can still be repaired, so fear, hope, and emotional attachment become the primary factors that sustain the toxic relationship

2. The Concept of Mahabbah from the Perspective of Rabi'ah Al-Adawiyah

The research findings indicate that the informants understand healthy love as love that is not only based on attraction but also on sincerity, respect, and the ability to care for one another. The informants believe that good love should not

cause a person to lose themselves, should not be controlling, and should not belittle the other person. The fourth informant stated,

“In my opinion, healthy love is love that makes a person feel calm, valued, and not overly controlled. Love should not cause a person to lose themselves. If love instead causes fear, stress, and a lack of freedom, then the relationship is no longer healthy.” (W-I⁴/2026)

Based on the research findings, mahabbah from Rabi’ah al-Adawiyah’s perspective is understood as divine love that places Allah at the center of one’s orientation toward love. Mahabbah is not interpreted as temporary emotional love, but rather as spiritual love that guides humans to draw closer to Allah, purify the heart, and control the ego. Rabi’ah’s concept of mahabbah signifies an elevation in the quality of love from ordinary love to a higher form of spiritual love. This indicates that mahabbah in Rabi’ah’s thought possesses a strong spiritual dimension because love is directed toward Allah as the ultimate goal.

3. The Relevance of Rabi’ah Al-Adawiyah’s Concept of Mahabbah

The research findings indicate that informants understand religious values or spirituality as crucial elements in building healthy relationships. Informant 1 stated that religious values teach people to respect one another, be honest, and treat their partners well. Informants 2 and 4 view religious values as a foundation for all actions, including in building relationships. Informant 3 also noted that religious values can serve as the foundation for relationships at a more serious level. Several informants expressed,

“In my opinion, religious values are important in relationships because they can serve as a reminder not to act solely on one’s ego. Through religion, one learns to be appreciative, patient, sincere, and to treat others well. So, a relationship isn’t just based on feelings; some responsibilities and boundaries must be maintained.” (W-I⁵/2026)

“I believe religious values are important because a healthy relationship isn’t just about feeling comfortable, but also about how a person treats others. If someone understands religion well, they’ll be more careful not to hurt, belittle, or overly control their partner. Religious values can serve as a foundation to keep relationships within healthy boundaries.” (W-I¹/2026)

Based on these findings, Rabi’ah al-Adawiyah’s value of mahabbah is relevant as a foundation for spiritual education in building healthy relationships. Healthy relationships require communication, trust, respect, personal boundaries, and the ability to control one’s ego. Meanwhile, a toxic relationship arises when love turns into control, domination, manipulation, or emotional dependence. Rabi’ah’s value of mahabbah is relevant because it teaches a love that is not dominated by the ego, is not transactional, and does not place another person at the center of absolute dependence.

Table 1. Research Findings

Focus of the Study	Key Findings	Informant Code
Early-adult students’ understanding of	Students understand healthy relationships as those characterized by mutual trust, mutual respect, open communication, honesty, a sense of	W-I ¹ /2026, W-I ³ /2026, W-I ⁴ /2026

healthy relationships and toxic relationships	security, non-judgment, and support for personal growth	
The Concept of Mahabbah from the Perspective of Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah	Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's mahabbah is understood as divine love centered on Allah—non-transactional, independent of reciprocity, and possessing the transformative power to purify the soul from ego, self-interest, and worldly attachments.	W-I ⁴ /2026
The Relevance of Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's Concept of "Mahabbah" as a Spiritual Foundation for Building Healthy Relationships	The value of "mahabbah" is relevant as a spiritual foundation for building love that is sincere, mindful of boundaries, non-possessive, non-manipulative, and free from attempts to dominate one another, while upholding the dignity of both oneself and others. The informants understood spirituality as a moral foundation for appreciating, respecting, being patient, acting selflessly, and controlling the ego in relationships.	W-I ⁵ /2026, W-I ¹ /2026

Based on these findings, Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's concept of mahabbah can be regarded as the foundation of spiritual education in building healthy relationships. The value of mahabbah which emphasizes sincerity, selflessness, ego control, and freedom from excessive attachment provides an ethical and spiritual foundation for interpreting human relationships in a more dignified manner. Thus, the results of this study demonstrate that Rabi'ah's concept of mahabbah is relevant for fostering an understanding of love that is non-possessive, non-manipulative, non-transactional, and does not undermine one's self-respect.

Discussion

Early-Adult Students' Understanding of Healthy and Toxic Relationships

Research findings indicate that young adult college students understand healthy relationships as ones built not only on emotional closeness but also on trust, communication, a sense of security, respect for personal boundaries, and mutual support for personal growth. This understanding shows that a healthy relationship is not merely one free from conflict, but rather one that upholds the dignity and psychological well-being of both parties. Healthy relationships also require the ability to listen empathetically so that communication functions not merely as an exchange of messages, but also as a space to understand a partner's feelings and needs. Trust, open communication, emotional closeness, and mutual respect are essential components of healthy relationships ([Brar dkk., 2023](#)).

Furthermore, active-empathic listening also plays a crucial role in building healthy romantic relationships in early adulthood ([Utami dkk., 2024](#)). The informants' understanding of healthy relationships indicates that love is increasingly viewed as a space for growth, rather than a form of possession. Healthy love is seen as a relationship that provides a sense of security, respects personal boundaries, and does not cause a person to lose themselves. In this context, a healthy relationship can be understood as one that balances closeness and freedom, affection and respect, as well as commitment and an awareness of boundaries. A healthy relationship is determined not only by the intensity of feelings but also by both parties' ability to manage emotions, communicate, and uphold each other's dignity.

Conversely, informants understood a toxic relationship as one characterized by possessiveness, excessive control, manipulation, verbal abuse, demeaning behavior, and a loss of respect for personal boundaries. These findings indicate that young adult students can recognize toxic relationships not only through physical violence

but also through emotional pressure and destructive communication patterns. A toxic relationship is an unhealthy relationship that contains negative elements and can undermine a person's sense of well-being ([Saskia dkk., 2023](#)). The effects of toxic relationships can also manifest as anxiety, depression, emotional stress, fear, and emotional exhaustion ([Qonitah dkk., 2024](#)).

A person's difficulty in leaving a toxic relationship demonstrates that love does not always function rationally. Affection, hopes that the partner will change, fear of loss, habit, and emotional dependence can cause someone to remain in a relationship that is actually harmful. In such situations, love can turn into an unhealthy attachment because a person finds it difficult to make decisions even though the relationship has been detrimental to them. Emotional regulation has a negative association with dating violence among college students in toxic relationships; thus, poor emotional regulation skills can increase the risk of violence within the relationship ([Young & Huwae, 2022](#)). Passionate love may also be linked to dating violence among college student victims, particularly when an awareness of boundaries and self-control does not accompany love ([Rahmawati & Farida, 2023](#)).

The Concept of Mahabbah from the Perspective of Rabi'ah Al-Adawiyah

Research findings indicate that the informants' understanding of healthy love closely parallels the concept of mahabbah, particularly in terms of sincerity, appreciation, ego control, and the awareness not to dominate one another. Although Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's mahabbah is rooted in divine love, the values it embodies can serve as a reflective foundation for understanding human love more healthily. In this context, mahabbah is not understood as romantic love, but as a spiritual orientation that guides humans so that love is not dominated by self-interest, ego, and an excessive desire to possess.

Mahabbah, from Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's perspective, places Allah at the center of one's orientation toward love. Love is no longer understood as an emotion directed solely toward other people, but as a spiritual awareness that directs the heart toward Allah. In the Sufi tradition, mahabbah serves as a path to purify the heart, subdue the ego, and refine one's inner orientation. Rabi'ah's mahabbah signifies an elevation in the quality of love from ordinary love toward a higher form of spiritual love ([Mustamin, 2020](#)). Based on this, mahabbah can be understood as a process of purifying love so that humans do not use love as a tool for satisfying the ego.

The uniqueness of Rabi'ah's mahabbah lies in its non-transactional nature. Love for Allah is not built on the hope of gaining paradise or the fear of hell, but arises from the awareness that Allah is indeed worthy of love. Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah is known as a female Sufi who pioneered the concept of mahabbah ilahiyah love for God grounded in spiritual power ([Yanti & Bahagia, 2023](#)). Rabi'ah also interpreted worship as a form of love for Allah without expecting the reward of paradise and without being driven by fear of the threat of hell ([Nurbaya, 2025](#)). Rabi'ah's mahabbah teaches a love that does not depend on reciprocity and is not controlled by self-interest.

In addition to being divine and non-transactional, Rabi'ah's mahabbah also possesses a transformative character. Divine love is not merely an inner experience but also shapes the way a person manages themselves, controls their desires, and organizes their life's orientation. The totality of love in Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's poetry presents God as the sole object of love, to whom one pours out love without expecting any reward whatsoever ([Fitriani, 2021](#)). These poems illustrate a shift in the orientation of love from a love centered on self-interest to a love centered on Allah. Mahabbah is not merely a Sufi concept but also the foundation for the development of spiritual consciousness that liberates humanity from self-interest and selfishness.

In the context of human relationships, Rabi'ah's mahabbah can be understood as a spiritual value that teaches sincerity, self-control, and liberation from excessive attachment. This value is essential for critiquing patterns of love that are manipulative, possessive, and destructive to one's dignity. Rabi'ah's mahabbah can be reinterpreted in the context of modern life without severing it from its Sufi roots ([Owie, 2023](#)). Rabi'ah's Sufism of divine love is also relevant to contemporary issues because it contains spiritual values that can guide people in facing the challenges of modern life ([Figron & Dwi Parawati, 2023](#)).

Based on this discussion, Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's mahabbah can be defined by three main characteristics. First, mahabbah is divine in nature because Allah is the center of this love's orientation. Second, mahabbah is non-transactional because it is not driven by self-interest, reward, or personal gain. Third, mahabbah is transformative because it shapes individuals so they can control their egos and purify their inner orientation. These three characteristics demonstrate that mahabbah not only describes the vertical relationship between humans and Allah but also provides an ethical-spiritual foundation for understanding love in a healthier and more dignified way.

The Relevance of Rabi'ah Al-Adawiyah's Concept of Mahabbah

The relevance of Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's concept of mahabbah in building healthy relationships lies in its ability to provide a foundation of spiritual education for understanding love. Healthy relationships cannot be understood solely through communication, trust, and emotional comfort; they also require clarity of inner orientation. Spiritual values help a person understand that love must never be used as an excuse to dominate, hurt, or belittle others. Spirituality can strengthen the connection between love and relational harmony ([Aziz & Mangestuti, 2021](#)). Rabi'ah's concept of mahabbah guides us to purify love of self-interest, selfishness, and the desire to dominate.

Rabi'ah's concept of mahabbah is relevant as a foundation for spiritual education because it guides people to love sincerely, with an awareness of boundaries, and in a non-transactional manner. In toxic relationships, love often turns into demands, control, dependence, or justification for hurtful behavior. Such patterns indicate that love has lost its ethical and spiritual orientation. Self-esteem and resilience are critical issues for students affected by toxic relationships ([Pantjo'u & Kusumiati, 2024](#)). These findings reinforce the analysis that unhealthy relationships can undermine a person's self-esteem and psychological resilience. Therefore, mahabbah can serve as a spiritual critique of the kind of love that causes people to lose their dignity.

The primary contribution of Rabi'ah's mahabbah to building healthy relationships lies in its ability to purify the orientation of love. Mahabbah teaches that love should not cause a person to lose themselves, lose their dignity, or make another person the absolute center of their life. In a healthy relationship, love should bring peace, mutual support, and help both parties grow. Toxic relationships can cause inner conflict that leads to anger, depression, or anxiety ([Julianto dkk., 2020](#)). Rabi'ah's concept of mahabbah can serve as the foundation of spiritual education to guide love so that it does not become a source of inner pain, but rather a space for moral and spiritual growth.

This study does not position mahabbah as a substitute for psychological concepts regarding healthy relationships, but rather as a reinforcement of the inner dimension that is often overlooked in discussions of modern relationships. Healthy relationships still require communication, trust, respect for personal boundaries, and the ability to manage emotions. However, all of these elements must be supported by spiritual

awareness so that love does not turn into control, manipulation, or emotional dependence. From this perspective, mahabbah makes a significant contribution by guiding love to be sincere, mindful of boundaries, non-dominating, non-transactional, and grounded in awareness of Allah.

Thus, Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's concept of mahabbah is relevant as the foundation of spiritual education in building healthy relationships. The value of mahabbah can help the younger generation understand that healthy love is not love that restricts, dominates, or negates one's dignity. Healthy love is love that liberates from the ego, maintains boundaries, respects human dignity, and guides a person toward goodness. In the context of spiritual education, mahabbah can be cultivated as a reflective value to foster literacy in healthy relationships, particularly for early-adult college students who are developing emotional, social, and spiritual maturity.

Conclusion

This study concludes that young adult college students understand healthy relationships as those built on trust, communication, respect, a sense of security, honesty, and the ability to support one another. Conversely, a toxic relationship is understood as one characterized by possessiveness, excessive control, manipulation, verbal abuse, emotional dependence, and a loss of respect for personal boundaries. These findings indicate that early-adult college students already possess an initial awareness of how to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy relationships. However, this awareness still needs to be strengthened through education in values and spirituality.

The concept of mahabbah from the perspective of Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah is understood as divine love that places Allah at the center of one's orientation toward love. Mahabbah possesses divine, non-transactional, and transformative characteristics because it guides humans to purify their hearts, control their egos, and free themselves from self-interest and excessive attachment to anything other than Allah. Thus, Rabi'ah's mahabbah is not positioned as romantic love, but as a concept of spiritual love that can provide an ethical foundation for humans to understand love in a more sincere, clear, and dignified manner.

The relevance of Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah's mahabbah in building healthy relationships lies in its ability to offer a foundation for spiritual education in understanding love. The value of mahabbah guides love so that it is not ego-centered, transactional, possessive, manipulative, or domineering. This study is still limited to written interviews with a small number of informants; therefore, future research is recommended to involve a more diverse group of informants and utilize in-depth interviews so that the meanings of healthy relationships, toxic relationships, and the value of mahabbah can be examined more comprehensively.

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