



Coercive Control and Power Relations in the memoir Broken Strings: An Analysis of Domination, Victim-Blaming, and Grooming

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji representasi *coercive control* (kontrol koersif) dan relasi kuasa dalam memoar *Broken Strings* karya Aurélie dengan menerapkan teori *coercive control* dari Evan Stark dan teori feminis tentang cinta serta dominasi dari bell hooks. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi bentuk-bentuk *coercive control* yang dialami korban serta menganalisis bagaimana dominasi dinormalisasi melalui hubungan romantis. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik *close reading* dan analisis tekstual terhadap beberapa kutipan terpilih dari memoar tersebut. Analisis ini mengacu pada teori Evan Stark (2007) yang menjelaskan bahwa dalam sebuah hubungan sering terdapat relasi antara pihak dominan dan subordinat, serta konsep cinta, patriarki, dan dominasi yang dikembangkan oleh bell hooks (2000), yang menjelaskan bahwa banyak hubungan romantis dalam masyarakat sebenarnya tidak dibangun atas dasar cinta yang sehat dan setara, melainkan atas dominasi, kontrol, dan relasi kuasa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya tujuh bentuk *coercive control* yang dialami oleh Aurélie, yaitu manipulasi emosional, isolasi, intimidasi, dominasi, ketergantungan, *victim-blaming* (menyalahkan korban), serta pengawasan/kontrol. Bentuk-bentuk kontrol ini secara sistematis dilakukan oleh Bobby untuk membatasi otonomi Aurélie, mengurangi interaksi sosialnya, dan menciptakan ketergantungan psikologis. Analisis menunjukkan bahwa *coercive control* tidak hanya bergantung pada kekerasan fisik, tetapi juga beroperasi melalui tekanan emosional, rasa takut, manipulasi, dan pemantauan terus-menerus terhadap kehidupan sehari-hari korban. Akibatnya, korban secara bertahap kehilangan rasa percaya diri, kemandirian, serta kemampuan untuk mengambil keputusan secara bebas. Lebih lanjut, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa perilaku mengontrol dan posesif berulang kali direpresentasikan sebagai bentuk cinta dan perhatian. Melalui manipulasi emosional dan ekspektasi patriarkal, tindakan Bobby dinormalisasi dan ditafsirkan oleh Aurélie sebagai bukti kasih sayang, bukan sebagai bentuk kekerasan. Temuan ini mendukung argumen bell hooks bahwa budaya patriarki sering menyamakan cinta dengan kepemilikan, kontrol, dan dominasi. Akibatnya, korban mengalami kesulitan untuk mengenali sifat abusif dari hubungan tersebut dan menjadi semakin bergantung pada pelaku.

Kata kunci: Coercive Control, Relasi Kuasa, Dominasi, Victim-Blaming, Grooming

Abstract

This study examines the representation of coercive control and power relations in Aurélie's memoir *Broken Strings* by applying Evan Stark's theory of coercive control and bell hooks' feminist theory of love and domination. The research aims to identify the forms of coercive control experienced by the victim and to examine how domination is normalized through romantic relationships. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method using close reading and textual analysis of selected passages from the memoir. This analysis integrates Evan Stark's (2007) and explains that in a relationship there is often a relationship between the dominant and subordinate parties yang dimana concepts of love, patriarchy, and domination are developed by Bell hooks (2000) and explains that many romantic relationships in society are not actually built on the basis of healthy and equal love but on domination, control, and power. The findings reveal seven forms of coercive control experienced by Aurélie, namely emotional manipulation, isolation, intimidation, domination, dependency, victim-blaming, and surveillance/control. These forms of control are systematically exercised by Bobby to restrict Aurélie's autonomy, limit her social interactions, and create psychological dependence. The analysis demonstrates that coercive control does not rely solely on physical violence but operates through emotional pressure, fear, manipulation, and continuous monitoring of the victim's daily life. As a result, the victim gradually loses confidence, independence, and the ability to make decisions freely. Furthermore, the study shows that controlling and possessive behaviors are repeatedly presented as expressions of love and care. Through emotional manipulation and patriarchal expectations, Bobby's actions are normalized and interpreted by Aurélie as evidence of affection rather than abuse. This finding supports bell hooks' argument that patriarchal culture often equates love with possession, control, and domination. Consequently, the victim finds it difficult to recognize the abusive nature of the relationship and becomes increasingly dependent on the perpetrator.

Keywords : Coercive Control, Power Relations, Domination, Victim-Blaming, Grooming.

A. Introduction

Broken Strings is a memoir written by (Moeremans, 2025), recounting her real-life experiences of grooming and trauma during her adolescence. Formerly a private untold story, the narrative was confined to personal therapy sessions. After years of healing, the author decided to publish the book with a bold identity and purpose while retaining the symbolic title *Broken Strings*. By addressing important issues such as child grooming and emotional manipulation that are rarely discussed, the story reflects real social issues such as power relations and the culture of silence. This memoir is also important to study because it can help readers recognize unhealthy relationships, raise awareness of child protection issues, and empower victims by affirming that they are not to blame.

(Lagorse, 2026) has examined women's experiences in cultic groups through the lens of coercive control; the study primarily focuses on real-life experiences within cultic communities. Little attention has been given to the representation of coercive control in memoir literature, particularly regarding the intersection of domination and victim-blaming. Both studies discuss coercive control and power relations as forms of domination that limit the freedom of the victim. This study focuses on the real experiences of women in cult groups, while this study examines the representation of coercive control, domination, and victim-blaming in the memoir *Broken Strings*. Lagorse's research has not addressed how coercive control is represented in autobiographical literature, particularly in relation to the relationship between domination and victim-blaming. Therefore, this study fills this gap by analyzing the representation of power, domination, and victim-blaming relations in the memoir *Broken Strings*.

(Sheley, K.A., & Shaw, 1979), social power is a person's ability to control or influence the behavior of others through control over rewards and punishments. Power is not only seen from its possession but also from how a person uses, threatens to use, or chooses not to use that power in social relations and relations of domination. Both studies discuss power relations and the use of power to control the behavior of other individuals in a relationship. The difference in this research focuses on the concept of social power through the control of rewards and punishments in social relations in general. However, the study has not examined how power is represented in autobiographical memoirs as well as its relation to coercive control and victim-blaming. Therefore, the study "Coercive Control and Power Relations in Memoir *Broken Strings*:

An Analysis of Domination and Victim-Blaming" fills the gap by analyzing the representation of power, domination, and victim-blaming relations in the memoir *Broken Strings*.

(Perry, E., Rothschild Elyassi, G., & Renan Barzilay, 2025), It found that women who experience coercive control often remain in unequal power relations after separation from the perpetrator because control can continue through legal and institutional mechanisms. Both studies discuss *coercive control* and power relations as a form of dominance used by perpetrators to maintain control over victims through various forms of psychological control. This research differential focuses on women's real experiences in the context of post-separation family law and how legal systems and institutions can maintain power relations inequality. Meanwhile, the research "Coercive Control and Power Relations in Memoir *Broken Strings*: An Analysis of Domination and Victim-Blaming" focuses on the representation of power, domination, and *victim-blaming* relations in the memoir *Broken Strings*. Therefore, this study fills this gap by examining how *coercive control*, domination, and *victim-blaming* are represented in autobiographical literary works, thus expanding the study from legal and social contexts to literary contexts.

(Philips, 2021) found that gaslighting is a form of psychological manipulation that makes the victim doubt his perception and understanding of reality so that the perpetrator can maintain control and dominance in the relationship. Similarities: Both studies discuss coercive control as a form of control and dominance in abusive relationships. In addition, both highlight how perpetrators use psychological manipulation to maintain power over victims. Differences The research focuses on the representation of gaslighting and coercive control in fictional works in the domestic noir genre, while this research focuses on the representation of power relations, domination, and victim-blaming in the memoir *Broken Strings*, which is based on the author's real experiences. Thus, this study expands on previous studies by adding an analysis of power relations and victim-blaming in the context of autobiographical memoirs.

(William, 2010) found that perpetrators of domestic violence use coercive control through psychological manipulation, isolation, and emotional control to control the victim. As a result, victims often doubt their own perceptions and live in the reality formed by the perpetrator, thus losing their freedom and autonomy. Both studies discuss coercive control as a form of domination that limits the freedom and autonomy of the victim through psychological control. However, the difference in this study focuses on the real experiences of victims of domestic violence, while this study examines the representation of coercive control, domination, and victim-blaming in the memoir *Broken Strings*. Williamson's research has not addressed how power relations and victim-blaming are represented in autobiographical literature. Therefore, this study fills the gap by analyzing the representation of dominance and victim-blaming.

(Renehan et.al 2023) state that domestic violence survivors often experience self-blame due to perpetrator manipulation, social stigma such as the "crazy ex" label, and environmental responses that tend to blame victims when they share experiences of violence. (Renehan et.al 2023), and the current study both discuss domestic violence related to self-blame, social stigma, and environmental tendency to blame victims when they share experiences of violence, but the difference lies in the focus of the study, where Renehan et al. place more emphasis on the phenomenon of self-blame, the "crazy ex" label, and responsabilization in the context of information sharing, while the current research focuses on the analysis of power relations and coercive control in shaping the dynamics of domestic violence. This study has not in-depth explained how the structure of power relations and coercive control works systematically in shaping victim self-blame and looks more at social stigma than psychological control mechanisms in relationships. Therefore, this study fills this gap by analyzing how coercive control and power relations directly form self-blame as a result of systematic psychological control strategies by perpetrators, thereby providing a more structural and in-depth understanding of the experiences of victims of domestic violence.

Based on the issues discussed in previous research, coercive control and power relations have been extensively researched in various contexts such as domestic violence, cult groups, gaslighting, and post-separation legal systems, where findings consistently show that domination, psychological manipulation, and victim-blaming are central mechanisms used to maintain control over the victim. However, most of these studies have focused on life experiences or social contexts and have not sufficiently explored how coercive control, domination, and victim-blaming are represented in autobiographical literary works, especially in memoir narratives such as *Broken Strings*. Based on the issues discussed above, this study aims to analyze the representation of coercive control and power relations in *Broken Strings*, especially the forms of domination and victim-blaming experienced by the victim. The study

also examines how these practices contribute to the maintenance of unequal power relations in intimate relationships. How do emotional manipulation, domination, and victim-blaming operate in memoirs?

B. Methodology

This study uses the qualitative descriptive method of (Creswell, 2014), to describe in detail the coercive control and power relations manifested in the memoir *Broken Strings: Fragments of the Stolen Youth*. The qualitative approach was chosen because the meaning, context, and nuances of coercive control, domination, victim blaming, and grooming are explored in depth rather than quantified in numerical form. This research focuses on how power dynamics emerge in narrative structures, especially through the author's experiences, the actions of the perpetrator, and the relationships between characters, so that they can be understood as part of the social process accommodated in autobiographical literary works.

This research also seeks to explain how coercion of control and power relations emerge and function in memoirs, through the setting of family dynamics, intimate relationships, marriage, and the social environment, as well as the conflicts experienced by the main character (Aurélié Moeremans). Concepts such as dommination, victim blaming, and power relations are examined how they are presented in the narrative, dialogue, description, and storyline of the memoir. The main data comes from the memoir *Broken strings* (2023/2024) by Aurélié Moeremans which recounts how the author was groomed as a 15-year-old teenager by a man more than a decade older, who did "love bombing", and after turning 18, married herself by playing the actor as the author's parents in a church wedding in West Java.

This study also seeks to show the relevance of coercive control and power relations in the memoir *broken strings* to real life, especially in the context of toxic relationships, child grooming, and a culture of society that tends to victim-blame. The researcher relates the findings from the text to social situations outside of literature, to show that memoirs can serve as both a mirror and a social critique of abusive dynamics that often remain invisible or normalized in everyday life. Thus, the results of the research are expected not only to provide an analytical description of domination, victim-blaming, and grooming as they appear in the memoir, but also to offer insight for readers, educators, and practitioners on how literary works can be used to understand, recognize, and challenge harmful patterns of power and control in social relationships.

C. Results and Discussion

From the analysis of the text of the memoir *Broken Strings: Fragments of a Stolen Youth* by Aurélié Moeremans, according to Evan Stark (2007) through the theory of Coercive Control, social relationships can contain unequal power relations in which one individual dominates and controls another psychologically and emotionally. Power does not only appear in the form of physical violence, but also through manipulation, excessive control, intimidation, isolation, and emotional dependence that are often considered normal in intimate relationships. Some social values found in the memoir are reflected through the characters and relationships in the story.

Evan Stark developed a sociological theory that focused on how control works in everyday relationships, how victims gradually lose freedom and independence, how domination can occur without visible physical violence, and how individuals are influenced by manipulation and emotional pressure in their social environment. Through this theory, unequal relationships are understood as a form of coercive control in which the dominant person slowly limits the victim's choices, identity, and social connections. Based on the thinking of (Stark, 2007), indicators of coercive control can be seen from behaviors such as:

Emotional manipulation

Power does not only appear through physical violence but also through emotional control, manipulation, intimidation, social isolation, and psychological dependence.

Data 1: "He always found a way to turn things around, making me feel like I was the failure." (BS, p. 30)

Data 2 : "He said my boundaries were childish, my fear was cruel, my rejection was selfish. And when I finally whispered 'yes already,' it wasn't because I wanted to, but because I gave in to the pressure..." (BS, p. 38)

Data 3: *"He never treated me as an equal human being. He just takes, controls, and destroys."* (BS, P. 190)

The data indicates that the power relationship in *Broken Strings* develops gradually through emotional manipulation that starts from the reversal of the mistake so that the victim continues to be positioned as a failed party, which in the perspective of coercive control (Stark) is the initial stage of the formation of psychological dominance and the weakening of the victim's self-perception. Over time, such control evolves into an erosion of autonomy through emotional devaluation and psychological distress, in which the victim is forced to surrender not of free will but because of psychological pressure that leads to compelled compliance. In the final stage, power relations turn into total domination characterized by the dehumanization of the victim, when the perpetrator no longer views the victim as an equal individual but as an object that can be controlled and destroyed. Overall, this memoir also criticizes the culture that allows the practice of coercive control to take place and directs the reader to clearly understand the difference in position between the perpetrator as an agent of domination and the victim as a party who experiences systematic psychological control.

Isolation

Isolation is an important strategy in coercive control because when the victim loses social support, the victim becomes more controllable, has difficulty asking for help, and begins to accept dominance as something normal in the relationship.

Data 1: *"The more often it exists, the smaller the world outside. I stopped texting friends and stopped going out except for work. It fills my days and my thoughts."* (BS, p. 22)

Data 2: *"He told me that I really loved him, that I had no reason to talk to other guys, and he finally forced me to delete all my male contacts on BlackBerry Messenger, the app that everyone was using at the time."* (BS, p. 32)

Data 3: *"Bobby doesn't allow... I obeyed, even though my heart was broken."* (BS, p. 132).

The data indicates that it shows that the isolation strategy in *Broken Strings* gradually eliminates the victim's autonomy, starting from narrowing social life until the victim stops interacting with friends and the outside world, then progresses to direct control when the perpetrator forbids certain social relationships and forces the victim to remove contact, until finally the victim is fully subject to the perpetrator's rules even though he feels hurt. This process reflects coercive control (Stark) in which the victim loses his freedom and the dependence on the perpetrator is stronger due to the loss of social support. The memoir also criticizes a culture that normalizes control in intimate relationships as a form of "love," when in fact it is a restriction of freedom and a form of domination. Through this narrative, the reader is directed to understand the victim as a party who is isolated and systematically controlled, while the perpetrator is positioned as an agent of power who uses isolation to maintain dominance in the relationship.

Intimidation

Intimidation is a form of psychological control used by the perpetrator to make the victim feel afraid, threatened, and helpless so that the victim is easier to control.

Data 1: *"He stopped smiling, his eyes trembled, realizing that he had crossed the line. But instead of moving away, he moved closer again, his voice soft, but more threatening than before. "You will be my wife."* (BS, p. 42)

Data 2 : *"None of them understood that my silence was not peace, but fear."* (BS, p.57)

The data indicates that it shows that the power relations in *Broken Strings* are built gradually through intimidation strategies that create fear and helplessness in the victim, starting from subtle threats hidden in the actions and words of the perpetrator, as in Data 1 when the perpetrator keeps approaching while saying, "You will be my wife," which shows an escalation of control from emotional distress to a more obvious psychological threat. This process causes the victim to lose autonomy because fear makes him no longer able to react freely, even choosing silence as a form of self-protection, as seen in Data 2, which affirms that "silence was not peace, but fear." The memoir also criticizes the culture that allows coercive control to occur, especially the normalization of intimidating behavior in intimate relationships that is often mistaken for attention or commitment, even though it is a form of domination. Through this narrative, the reader is directed to understand that the victim is in a position of being depressed and threatened, while the perpetrator is positioned as an agent of power who uses intimidation to maintain control in the relationship.

Domination

Domination is a condition when the perpetrator has greater power and control in the relationship so that the victim loses freedom, independence, and the ability to make decisions for themselves.

Data 1: *"And in the middle of my confusion, he lost his patience. He pulled my dress up, covered my mouth with his hand, heavy, the smell of cigarette smoke stinging my nose as I tried to breathe. Then he pressed his body against mine, quickly, suddenly, without warning."* (BS, p. 140)

Data 2: *He told me that if I truly loved him, I had no reason to talk to other boys, and eventually he forced me to delete all my male contacts on BlackBerry Messenger."* (BS, p. 32)

The data indicates that it shows that the power relationship in *Broken Strings* reaches a stage of domination, where the perpetrator has full control in the relationship and directly deprives the victim of freedom and autonomy. Power relations are built gradually, starting with emotional control and manipulation and then progressing to more tangible acts of coercion such as restricting social interaction and coercion of obedience, as seen in Data 2 when the victim is forced to remove all male contact as a form of total control over her social life. At a more extreme stage, Data 1 shows physical dominance that reinforces the loss of the victim's autonomy as a whole because the victim's body and decisions are completely controlled without consent or room for refusal. The memoir also criticizes the culture that allows coercive control to occur, especially the normalization of dominance in intimate relationships that is often wrapped up as a form of "love" or "care," even though it is a form of violence and a deprivation of freedom. Through this narrative, the reader is directed to understand that the victim is in a subordinate position that is completely controlled, while the perpetrator is positioned as an agent of power who uses dominance to maintain absolute control in the relationship.

Dependency

Dependency is a condition when the victim becomes emotionally, psychologically, socially, or even economically dependent on the perpetrator so that the victim finds it difficult to leave the relationship.

Data 1: *The more often he was there, the smaller the outside world became. I stopped texting friends and stopped going out except for work. He filled my days and my thoughts."* (BS, p. 22)

Data 2: *Every argument always ended the same way, with me feeling smaller and more convinced that I was the problem."* (BS, p. 31)

Data 3: *"I'm starting to be more afraid of Bobby than I am of you, even though I've been the one I've been the most afraid to disappoint."* (BS, p. 57)

The data indicates that the power relationship in *Broken Strings* is built through a dependency strategy, where the victim gradually becomes emotionally and psychologically dependent on the perpetrator so that it is difficult to escape from the relationship. Power relations begin slowly when the victim's social world narrows and his mind begins to be dominated by the perpetrator, as in Data 1, which shows a loss of connection with the outside environment so that the perpetrator becomes the center of the victim's life. This process continues in Data 2 when each conflict makes the victim feel more inferior and believe that he or she is the problem, which signals a loss of autonomy in thinking and assessing oneself objectively. In Data 3, this dependence is strengthened as the victim experiences complex emotional conflicts, where fear and the need not to disappoint the perpetrator keep them in the relationship. The memoir also criticizes the culture that allows coercive control to occur, especially the normalization of emotional dependence in intimate relationships that is often mistaken for love, even though it is a form of psychological control. Through this narrative, the reader is directed to understand that the victim is in an increasingly dependent and helpless position, while the perpetrator is positioned as a dominant figure who strengthens that dependence to maintain power in the relationship.

Victim blaming

Victim blaming is a condition when the victim is made to feel guilty for the violence, control, or mistreatment he or she has experienced. The perpetrator often manipulates the victim into believing that all the problems occurred because of the victim's own fault so that the victim feels obligated to obey, change, or thank the perpetrator. As a result, the victim loses confidence and finds it difficult to realize that he is experiencing violence or manipulation.

Data 1: *"He always found a way to twist everything, making me feel like I was the one who had failed."* (BS, p. 30)

Data 2: *"And when I finally whispered 'fine,' it was not because I wanted to, but because I surrendered to the pressure, the guilt, and the accusation that I contributed nothing to the relationship."* (BS, p. 38)

Data 3: *"If I hadn't been with him, I would have been like that girl, a lost, sinful girl."* (BS, p. 143).

The data indicates that the power relationship in *Broken Strings* is built through the victim-blaming strategy, where the perpetrator gradually manipulates the victim until he feels guilty for violence and problems in the relationship. This can be seen in Data 1 when the victim is always positioned as a failed party, Data 2 when the victim gives up due to pressure and guilt, and Data 3 when the victim begins to internalize negative stigma against him. This process leads to a loss of autonomy because the victim is no longer able to assess the situation objectively and ultimately accepts the perpetrator's narrative. The memoir also criticizes a culture that blames victims in abusive relationships, while readers are directed to see the perpetrator as a party who uses guilt as a tool of control and the victim as an individual trapped in psychological manipulation.

Surveillance / Control

The actions of the perpetrator who constantly supervises, regulates, and limits the victim's life to maintain power in the relationship. This control is not always carried out through physical violence but also through supervision of the victim's daily activities, communication, association, way of dressing, and the victim's personal decisions.

Data 1: *"I hold my phone at all times, reporting where I am, with whom, and what I'm doing. If I take too long to reply, he accuses me. If I reply quickly, it is still wrong. Every message becomes a new test."* (BS, p. 38).

Data 2: *Even when he wasn't there, I wasn't free. He demanded constant news. I hold my phone at all times, reporting where I am, with whom, and what. If I take too long to reply, he accuses me. If I reply quickly, it is still wrong. Every message becomes a new test."* (BS, p. 32)

The data indicates that the power relationship in *Broken Strings* is built through a surveillance/control strategy, where the victim is continuously monitored and controlled through binding communication so that their autonomy is increasingly lost. This can be seen in Data 1 and Data 2 when the victim must always report his or her activities, while any response given is still considered incorrect, indicating that there is no room for the victim to act freely or safely in communicating. This condition causes a loss of autonomy because the victim lives under constant pressure of supervision, so every daily action must be adjusted to the expectations of the perpetrator. The memoir also criticizes a culture that normalizes control in intimate relationships through technology, where surveillance is considered a form of attention or love, when it is a form of coercive control. Through this narrative, the reader is directed to understand that the victim is in a state of constant surveillance and distress, while the perpetrator is positioned as a dominant figure who uses control and surveillance to maintain power in the relationship.

In data shows emotional control and domination in Bobby's relationship with Aurélie. According to Evan Stark, coercive control occurs when the perpetrator gradually limits the victim's freedom and creates psychological dependency. This condition also reflects (Hooks, 2000) Feminist Theory of Love and Domination explains that many romantic relationships in society are not actually built on the basis of healthy and equal love, but on domination, control, and power. According to bell hooks, patriarchal culture often teaches that love is synonymous with possession, jealousy, excessive sacrifice, and control over a partner. As a result, manipulative and possessive behavior is often considered a sign of affection in relationships. Indicators of Feminist Theory of Love and Domination can be seen in behaviors such as:

Control is considered love

According to bell hooks in the theory of love and patriarchy, the idea that control is considered love means that a person begins to consider the behavior of regulating, restricting, or controlling a partner as a form of affection. In patriarchal cultures, excessive attention, possessiveness, and prohibition of one's partner are often considered evidence of love, when in fact they can be a form of domination and emotional control.

Data 1: *"The more often it exists, the smaller the world outside. I stopped texting friends and stopped going out except for work. It fills my days and my thoughts. It doesn't feel like control. It feels like love."* (BS, p. 21-22).

Data 2: *"But he seemed patient; he didn't force me as much as I feared, and it made me think he really loved me"* (BS, p. 37).

Data 3: *"Then, as if nothing had happened, he kissed my forehead gently and whispered, 'Calm down, you're going to be my wife.'"* (BS, p. 41).

The data indicates that it shows that power relations in *Broken Strings* are built through the normalization of control as a form of love, as Bell Hooks explains that in patriarchal cultures, controlling and limiting behavior in couples is often considered affection. This causes the victim to gradually lose autonomy, seen in Data 1 when social restrictions and isolation are not realized as control but are perceived as "love," and in Data 2 and Data 3 when manipulative attitudes and acts of physical domination are wrapped in a gentle and caring impression so that the victim feels that the perpetrator truly loves him. This process makes it difficult for victims to recognize violence because emotional control is normalized as a form of intimacy so that the victim's autonomy is increasingly lost. The memoir also criticizes the patriarchal culture that allows coercive control to occur, where possessiveness and restriction are considered natural in romantic relationships. Through this narrative, the reader is directed to understand that the victim is in a state of manipulation disguised as love, while the perpetrator is positioned as an agent of domination who uses "affection" as a means of control in the relationship.

Manipulation and possessiveness are considered affections

Manipulation and possessiveness are often disguised as a form of affection in unhealthy relationships. A person is made to feel responsible for their emotions, happiness, and even their partner's life. As a result, the victim finds it difficult to refuse the wishes of the partner for fear of being perceived as unloving or causing the partner to be hurt.

Data 1: *"Why did you tell your mother? Do you want him to hate me? I'm tired of being around kids. You have to be an adult. Prove that you can't be controlled anymore."* (BS, p. 32-33).

Data 2: *"If I say no, it means I don't love him. And if I don't love him, then it's useless for him to survive."* (BS, pp. 45-46).

Data 3: *"I only ask for small things; why should they be exaggerated?"* (BS, p. 38).

The data indicates that it shows that the power relationship in *Broken Strings* is built through a strategy of manipulation and possessiveness disguised as affection, where the perpetrator makes the victim feel responsible for his emotions and happiness so that the victim's autonomy is slowly lost. This can be seen in Data 1 when the perpetrator uses guilt and emotional pressure to control the victim's actions, and in Data 2 when the victim believes that refusing means not loving the perpetrator, which indicates a loss of freedom in decision-making. In Data 3, manipulation is strengthened by normalizing the perpetrator's demands as a "small thing" so that the victim feels guilty when he refuses. The memoir also criticizes the culture that allows coercive control to occur, especially the normalization of possessiveness and manipulation as a form of love in intimate relationships. Through this narrative, the reader is directed to understand that the victim loses autonomy because he is conditioned to feel responsible for the perpetrator's emotions, while the perpetrator is positioned as an agent of domination who uses "affection" as a tool of psychological control.

Possessiveness is called love

In a patriarchal culture, possessive and hurtful behavior of partners is often considered a form of love. A person may hurt, dominate, or control their partner, then cover up the act with care or affection so that the victim considers it normal in the relationship.

Data 1: *"Every fight always ends the same, with me getting smaller, convinced that I'm the one in trouble."* (BS, p. 37).

Data 2: *"He told me that I really loved him, that I had no reason to talk to other men, and he finally forced me to cut off all male contacts..."* (BS, p. 38).

Data 3: *"For Bobby, that's love. Wounded, then treated. Hurt, then hug. Master it, then call it love."* (BS, p. 145).

The data indicates that *Broken Strings* criticizes a patriarchal culture that normalizes possessive behavior and control as a form of love, so emotional violence is often disguised as affection. This is seen in Data 1 and Data 2 when the perpetrator consistently degrades and limits the victim, making him feel guilty and lose freedom in the relationship, while social controls such as the prohibition of having contact with others are considered evidence of love. Data 3 clarifies this criticism by asserting that from the perspective of the perpetrator, "love" is understood as a cycle of hurting and caring, which actually normalizes violence in relationships. Through this narrative, the memoir leads the reader to realize that the culture allows coercive control to occur by wrapping domination as love so that the victim is positioned as a party

trapped in the normalization of violence, while the perpetrator is shown as an agent of domination who controls and justifies his actions as a form of affection.

The victim accepts domination as normal

Domineering relationships often accept painful treatment as normal because they have been influenced by the wrong patterns of love. In patriarchal cultures, suffering, sacrifice, and pain are often considered part of the evidence of love, making it difficult for the victim to realize that he or she is experiencing emotional manipulation or violence.

Data 1: "And maybe I do believe it. Every quarrel seems to prove that it is true. He always finds a way to turn everything around, making me feel like I'm the one who failed." (BS, p. 30).

Data 2: "I started to think maybe he was right. Maybe I'm being selfish. Maybe I'm the one who ruined everything." (BS, p. 38).

Data 3: "I tried to believe that maybe this was proof that he really loved me, even though my body was telling me otherwise." (BS. P. 43-45).

The data indicates that the power relations in *Broken Strings* are built gradually through the internalization of control, where the victim begins to accept dominance as something normal due to the influence of the wrong relationship patterns in patriarchal culture. In Data 1, the victim begins to believe the perpetrator's narrative that always reverses the mistake, so that he feels that he has failed, which marks the beginning of the loss of autonomy in assessing reality objectively. This process is intensified in Data 2, when the victim begins to internalize guilt and self-doubt, which suggests that the perpetrator's psychological control has succeeded in shaping the victim's way of thinking. Data 3 shows a further stage when the victim tries to justify the painful experience as a form of love, even though physically and emotionally he is aware of the discomfort, which confirms the loss of autonomy and normalization of violence. The memoir also criticizes a patriarchal culture that considers suffering and sacrifice as evidence of love, thus allowing coercive control to take place unconsciously. Through this narrative, the reader is directed to understand that the victim is in a state of internalized domination, while the perpetrator is positioned as an agent of power that shapes the victim's perception of love and violence.

D. Conclusion

Based on the analysis that has been carried out, it can be concluded that *Broken Strings* represents coercive control as a form of power relations that are built gradually through emotional manipulation, isolation, intimidation, victim blaming, and normalization of control in intimate relationships. In Evan Stark's perspective, such control occurs not only through physical violence but also through systematic psychological strategies that slowly eliminate the victim's autonomy, establish dependence, and maintain the perpetrator's dominance in relationships. In addition, the findings of this study also show that coercive control in this memoir is reinforced by the construction of patriarchal culture as described by bell hooks, where possessive, restrictive, and even violent behavior is often mistaken for a form of love. This causes the victim to internalize dominance as something normal in the relationship, thereby strengthening the perpetrator's position as a party with power and blurring the boundary between love and control. Overall, this study confirms that the power relations in *Broken Strings* are not static but develop through a systematic and hidden process in which coercive control and patriarchal love ideology work together to maintain dominance as well as place the victim in a subordinate position in intimate relationships.

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