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The Fatherless Phenomenon: Building Self-Concept With Interpersonal Communication

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Abstract : This study is motivated by Indonesia's ranking as the third most fatherless country in the world according to data from Narasi. The absence of a father in a child's life can shape their self-concept, particularly in girls, and interpersonal communication plays a crucial role in the process of social adjustment. This study aims to investigate how interpersonal communication between fathers and daughters occurs, to understand the self-concept of girls experiencing fatherlessness, and to identify the factors of interpersonal communication in shaping the self-concept of girls experiencing fatherlessness. The research method used in this study is descriptive qualitative, employing observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The results of the study indicate that the self-concept of girls in fatherless conditions can be shaped by effective patterns of interpersonal communication. Daughters who lack effective interpersonal communication with their fathers tend to have negative self-concepts, but this can be minimized through adequate social support, such as daughters who receive support from family, friends, or an environment that can help develop a more optimal self-concept, even if the father's role is not fully fulfilled.

Keyword : Fatherless, Self-Concept, Interpersonal Communication, Social Relations

INTRODUCTION

The absence of father figures has become a hot topic because Indonesia ranks third among fatherless countries in the world according to data from Narasi (Dian, 2023). This shows that many Indonesian children do not have a father figure in their lives (Bago et al., 2024). This condition, referred to as fatherlessness, has become a focus of social psychology research due to its impact on children's personalities (Ashari, 2018), such as spiritual intelligence and emotional intelligence, which tend to show a decline in the understanding of spiritual values and a lack of ability to manage emotions, empathize, and build healthy relationships with the surrounding environment (Supriadi et al., 2024). Fatherlessness not only affects the child's personal life but also impacts the overall family dynamics, such as a lack of quality time, the emergence of conflicts and tensions, children feeling neglected or emotionally unsupported, and economic crises (Ilahiya et al., 2024). According to Smith, fatherlessness can arise due to

various factors, such as the death of the father, parental separation, or when the father abandons his family (Supriadi et al., 2024). Statistics from UNICEF indicate that 19.3% of Indonesian children do not have a father involved in their upbringing (Addin, 2024). Out of a total of 30.83 million children living in Indonesia, the number reaches 2,999,577 (Rahayu et al., 2024).

The formation of self-concept begins at birth and develops gradually throughout life, relating to acceptance of oneself and differences from others (Astika, 2016). Self-concept is formed through experiences related to the environment, particularly in close environments such as family and community (Majazeta Yusrina et al., 2024). Behavioral changes and learning occur simultaneously because learning is a process that takes place when an individual interacts with their environment (Nurfalah et al., 2020).

Humans and communication play a crucial role in establishing close relationships, as communication is the foundation of family relationships, social interactions, cultural development, and individual growth (Anfi et al., 2024). To shape a positive self-concept in children, parents need to build harmonious relationships and apply effective interpersonal communication. This aims to influence and change children's attitudes or behaviors for the better (Saidin, 2015).

Based on previous research, first Syarifah Halimatussa'diyah in "Interpersonal communication in the concept of adolescents with single parents" states that positive and consistent communication between parents, especially mothers as the main figure of children, can play an important role in creating an environment that supports the development of a healthy self-concept (Halimatussa'diyah, 2019). The second study by Clara Puspita and Aan Setiadarma, titled "Interpersonal Communication Between Fatherless Women and the Opposite Sex," also found that parental upbringing (in this case, the father) plays a very important role in shaping a child's character, whether the child is a girl or a boy. The character that is formed will serve as a foundation for the child to develop their social skills and soft skills in daily life (Puspita & Aan, 2020).

In the third study conducted by Lala Amalia and Ida Ri'aeni entitled "Analysis of Interpersonal Communication in the Formation of Self-Concept of Covid-19 Survivors," it is stated that the influence of people around them, such as family, friends, and neighbors, in verbal and nonverbal forms, has a significant impact on the formation of a person's self-concept. The communication that takes place can have a positive or negative influence on a person (Amalia & Ri'aeni, 2022)

Through the previous research above, there is a research gap that researchers can use to explore further. Researchers will analyze based on the perspective of girls who experience fatherlessness. From this starting point, the author's curiosity to understand the phenomenon of fatherlessness in shaping self-concept through interpersonal communication between fathers and daughters aims to identify the nature of interpersonal communication between fathers and daughters, understand the self-concept of daughters, and identify the factors influencing interpersonal communication in shaping the self-concept of daughters who have experienced fatherlessness.

This study is expected to be useful for parents, teachers, and other parties involved in assisting girls with fatherless conditions by providing a better understanding of the importance of interpersonal communication and creating an environment that supports the formation of a positive self-concept in girls.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method to understand and explore the meanings given by informants to social and humanitarian issues. According to Creswell (2018), the process in qualitative research involves several important stages, such as formulating research questions, collecting data from respondents, analyzing data inductively from specific themes

to general themes, and interpreting the meaning of the data obtained (Zaini et al., 2023). This study involved key informants who were female students at STMIK IKMI Cirebon aged 17–21 years, categorized based on different family structure experiences. The criteria for key informants included: 1) female students whose fathers are physically present but do not actively participate in their lives, 2) female students whose fathers have passed away, and 3) female students whose parents are divorced. Supporting informants in this study include the families and social circles of the key informants.

The data collection techniques used in this study were observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Zuchri, 2021). Observation was conducted to observe events and obtain initial information. In-depth interviews were conducted to gather information in depth and accurately, as well as to understand the reality and impact from various perspectives. Interviews were conducted face-to-face (offline) or via an online platform (WhatsApp), depending on the informant's preference. Documentation was used to supplement and validate the research data, so that this research can be accounted for later.

The data was analyzed using an interactive model that included three main steps, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Zuchri, 2021). Data reduction is the process of refining, classifying, channeling, and discarding irrelevant data so that the data is well organized to reach a final conclusion. Data presentation is the process of organizing information in a structured manner to facilitate the drawing of conclusions. The final stage, drawing conclusions, is used to provide a final understanding and take action based on the analysis conducted.

To ensure data accuracy, this study used source triangulation. This technique requires gathering information about Fatherless from various sources, including books, articles, news, and previous studies. The findings were then compared with primary data collected through interviews. The purpose of source triangulation is to compare and contrast the reliability of data collected from various sources. (Zuchri, 2021).

RESULT AND DISCUSION

Family background is an important aspect that must be analyzed in depth by researchers in order to classify informants into several predetermined categories. The results of this study are influenced in different ways by the diverse family backgrounds of each individual. Researchers and informants have agreed on the need to keep the identities of informants confidential in order to protect the reputation of their fathers and families.

Three women in this study met the criteria as key informants. Informant T is a 21-year-old woman who experienced fatherlessness due to her parents' divorce. Informant S, aged 19, experienced fatherlessness because her father had a temperamental personality. Meanwhile, Informant P experienced fatherlessness due to a lack of emotional bonding with her father since childhood. Despite their different backgrounds, all three share one commonality: they are currently pursuing their education at STMIK IKMI Cirebon. Additionally, Informant S works part-time while attending college, while Informant P works at a company.

Table 1. Background Data of Informants' Families

No.	Informant	Age	Occupation	Fatherless Condition	Description
1.	T	21 y/o	College Student	Parental divorce	As a result of his parents' divorce, she has been estranged from her father for a year and has not received any financial support
2.	S	19 y/o	College Student Committee	Marital problems between parents, but not to the point of divorce	Having a temperamental father who is verbally abusive and does not provide financial support

			and Part-Timer		
3.	P	21 y/o	College Student and Working Full-Time	Lack of emotional bond with father since childhood	Left behind by his father's death at an early age and a lack of family communication

Source: Processed by Researcher, 2024

Girls with Fatherless Conditions

The researchers observed that the fathers of two informants, T and S, did not fulfill their roles as fathers. This was evident from the statements of both informants, which indicated a lack of involvement by their fathers in their activities, minimal contact, little time spent together, and no financial support provided to them as children. Meanwhile, the father of informant P only fulfilled his role in terms of financial support, but other aspects remained unfulfilled.

Therefore, it can be correctly stated that the three informants are girls who are fatherless, in line with previous research conducted by (Sundari & Herdajani, 2013) where fatherlessness refers to the absence of a father's role in an individual's development, whether it be physical or psychological absence, which can be caused by divorce, the death of the father, the separation of the father and child's residence, or the separation of the father and child's closeness despite living under the same roof.

Therefore, it can be concluded that all three informants were girls who were fatherless. In this study, the term fatherless refers to the absence of a father's role in an individual's development, both physically and psychologically. This can be caused by divorce, the death of the father, the father and child living in different places, or a lack of emotional closeness even though they live in the same house.

Interpersonal Communication Between Fathers and Daughters

The absence of the father's role in the development of the informants, researchers can assess the intensity and effectiveness of communication between the three informants and their respective fathers at present. The research findings indicate that since childhood, the father of Informant T did not participate in any of the informant's activities, the father of Informant S had a temperamental nature, and the father of Informant P did not spend much time or participate in any of the informant's activities, leading to a distance between them. This aligns with research conducted by Dascha and Cahyono, which found that a father's inability to fulfill his role and functions as the head of the family can have significant emotional impacts on children. Children may feel emptiness, rejection, and tend to limit social interactions. Additionally, they may face economic issues and have lower self-confidence compared to children raised in complete and well-functioning families (Dascha & Cahyono, 2024).

Conversely, the three informants did not receive these things from their fathers, thereby hindering effective communication between the informants and their fathers. The quality of effective communication itself can be used as a benchmark in assessing the success of communication, namely: 1) Mindfulness 2) Immediacy 3) Openness 4) Expressiveness 5) Empathy 6) Supportiveness 7) Equality 8) Positive Feelings (Devito, 2016).

In this study, three informants who experienced fatherlessness did not receive all aspects of interpersonal communication from their fathers. Informant T, who experienced fatherlessness due to her parents' divorce, lost the father figure who should have been present in her daily life. She did not receive enough attention, so she lacked a sense of security in interacting with others. Unlike T, informant S, who experienced fatherlessness due to her temperamental father, grew up in an environment where communication was more often

marked by tension than warmth. As a result, she struggled to build emotional closeness with others. Meanwhile, informant P, who had minimal contact with her father from a young age, struggled with openness toward others, as she was not accustomed to sharing thoughts or feelings with a father figure..

In terms of expression, girls who have good interpersonal communication with their fathers will be accustomed to receiving supportive words, attentive tones of voice, and facial expressions that show affection. This is in contrast to the experiences of the informants in this study. Informant S, for example, more often encountered a high tone of voice and angry expressions from her father, which made her tend to suppress her emotions and be less expressive in communication.

In addition, empathy in interpersonal communication plays an important role in building healthy relationships. A father who communicates well will understand his child's feelings and provide motivation when needed. Conversely, the three informants in this study did not receive empathy from their fathers. Informant T, for example, had no one to confide in when he encountered difficulties because her father was no longer present in her life after the divorce. Informant S received anger more often than support, so she was not accustomed to receiving or giving motivation to others.

Support in communication is also an important factor that shapes girls' sense of security in interacting with others. A father who always supports his child will create a comfortable communication environment that is free from fear. However, the three informants in this study experienced the opposite. Informant T, for example, grew up without a sense of security in communicating with her father due to a lack of emotional involvement between them. As a result, she felt less confident in establishing interpersonal relationships.

Equality in communication between fathers and daughters also influences how daughters express their opinions. Communicative fathers provide a fair space for discussion and do not dominate the conversation. Unfortunately, informant S did not experience this because her temperamental father often did not give her the opportunity to speak or express her opinion. This made her accustomed to avoiding discussion.

Lastly, good interpersonal communication will create a positive feeling in the relationship between father and child. A father who maintains a good communication atmosphere will help his child grow up in an environment that is full of respect for his opinions. However, the informants in this study did not feel this way. They more often face less comfortable communication environments, whether due to the loss of their father, tension in the family, or lack of emotional ties.

In this study, the researchers found no indication of attention, closeness, openness, expressiveness, empathy, support, equality, or positive feelings in the communication between the informants and their fathers. The researchers concluded that the communication between the informants and their fathers was ineffective.

Self-concept of girls who have experienced fatherlessness

The self-concept of girls who have experienced fatherlessness encompasses three main aspects, namely material self, social self, and spiritual self (Liliweri, 2017). The results of the study indicate that the absence of a father figure has a significant impact on the formation of girls' self-concept in all three aspects. In terms of material self, individuals associate their identity with physical attributes, family, and material possessions. Based on the research findings, although all three informants have confidence in their physical appearance, the primary factor influencing the formation of self-concept in social interactions is the family's economic condition, as stated by Informants T and S. Both mentioned that the absence of material support from the father leads to feelings of insecurity within the family. This becomes

more pronounced when basic needs are not met due to the father's absence as the primary provider.

In terms of social self, a person's self-concept is shaped by how others view them. Effective interpersonal communication with fathers should help daughters feel valued and accepted in their social environment. However, in this study, ineffective communication between informants and their fathers resulted in Informant T growing up with low self-confidence in interacting with others due to their family background. Unlike Informant T, Informant P, who had minimal emotional connection with his father, experienced good social attachment because he received emotional support from his family and friends.

Meanwhile, in terms of Spiritual Self, a person forms their self-concept based on emotions and desires. In this study, the three informants faced different emotional challenges due to their poor relationships with their fathers. Informant S, who grew up with a temperamental father, had difficulty managing his emotions. Informant P, who did not have a strong emotional bond with his father, had difficulty understanding and expressing his feelings. Additionally, their motivation or drive to achieve their life goals may also be affected, as there was no father figure to provide encouragement or guidance in their life journey, such as Informant T, who lived solely for himself because he saw no one around him who cared.

Based on the findings of this study, the three informants experienced difficulties in developing a positive self-concept due to ineffective communication with their fathers. The absence of attention, closeness, openness, expressiveness, empathy, support, equality, and positive feelings in father-child communication caused the informants to grow up with an unstable self-concept. They adapted to the situation on their own and sought other sources of support outside their relationship with their fathers, such as family and friends, who could help the informants form a positive self-concept.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that ineffective interpersonal communication includes a lack of improvement in communication quality, which can be achieved by building relationships based on eight aspects of communication, namely attention, closeness, openness, expressiveness, empathy, support, equality, and positive feelings between fathers and daughters who experience fatherlessness in forming a complex and challenging self-concept. The self-concept experienced by daughters in fatherless situations and ineffective interpersonal communication includes feeling less valuable due to family disharmony, low self-esteem due to not receiving financial support from the father, difficulty expressing feelings to others, challenges in forming social relationships, and struggles in managing loneliness, anger, and sadness. It is important for families, friends, and society to act as sources of social support to build effective interpersonal communication, such as being physically and emotionally present, being willing to share thoughts, understanding feelings, and valuing opinions. This is done so that girls who have experienced fatherlessness can still build their self-concept optimally.

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