

## Communication Patterns in the Formation of Self-Concept in Early Adults Who Experience Fatherless in Medan City

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze communication patterns in the formation of self-concept in early adults who experience fatherlessness, analyze self-disclosure in early adults, and to analyze communication barriers felt by early adults who experience fatherlessness in Medan City. The theories used in this research are Symbolic Interaction Theory, Self-Concept and Self-Disclosure. This study uses a qualitative method. The number of informants in this study was 6 (six) early adults who experienced fatherlessness. The research results show that the absence of a father causes the emergence of dysfunctional communication patterns in the family which affects various aspects of the informants' lives such as communication with the surrounding environment and their self-concept. Communication barriers found in early adult individuals are psychological barriers or psychological noise, which is caused by the loss of the father's role due to death or his absence in the informant's growth and development during childhood. This condition creates a fear of communicating and causes difficulty in expressing feelings

## **INTRODUCTION**

Communication within the family has educational value. Parents want to pass on various norms and communication patterns to their children. These norms include morals, social norms, ethics, aesthetics and morals. There are two functions of communication in the family (Sabarua & Mornene, 2020). First, the function of social communication, this function states that communication is important for building self-concept, self-actualization, for survival, for obtaining happiness and for reducing oneself from pressure. For example, telling stories to your parents, or asking their opinion about a problem. Second, the function of cultural communication (Aryanti & Savitri, 2023). There is a reciprocal relationship between communication and culture. All forms of verbal, written, visual and audio communication contribute to shaping, shaping and maintaining culture. Interactions between parents and children, as well as within the family itself, help children learn about themselves and others, and understand the feelings and experiences of the people around them (Setyowati, 2005).

The way a person communicates learned in the family will be reflected in their interactions with other people. Self-concept plays an important role in interpersonal communication because individual behavior is influenced by their self-concept. This self-concept becomes a frame of reference for a person in interacting with their social environment. (William in (Agustiani, 2006). Through continuous interaction with the social environment, a person develops a self-concept. This self-concept greatly influences the individual's behavior, development and mental health. The higher a person's positive self-concept, the better the interpersonal communication will be he has (Yohana, 2014).

Based on research results from Amelia and Natsir, it shows a significant relationship between interpersonal communication in the family and juvenile delinquency. Children will feel safe at home and protected from bad external influences if there is effective communication within the family. Children who have good family communication can reduce the risk of being involved in juvenile delinquency such as brawls, illegal racing and drunkenness (Amalia & Natsir, 2017). Conversely, in families with dysfunctional communication patterns, children may seek negative external influences to fulfill their emotional needs that are not being met at home (Sari et al., 2022).

Medan, as the third largest city in Indonesia, also has great potential to have high cases of fatherlessness where the father's position is the head of the household, breadwinner and surname provider only. There are many children who experience fatherlessness in the city of Medan. Based on the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2021 and 2022, there were thousands of cases of domestic violence (KDRT) in Indonesia, with North Sumatra being the province with the highest number of incidents, and the region with the most reported cases of domestic violence in Indonesia. The Child and Women's Protection Unit (PPA) of the Medan Police Criminal Investigation Unit said that the number of domestic violence in Medan City has also increased throughout 2023 and is at 733 cases.

The divorce rate in North Sumatra increases from year to year. The population of North Sumatra who are divorced is 113.94 thousand people or 0.75% of the total population which reached 15.18 million people at the end of June 2021 (Kusnandar, 2021). In 2022, North Sumatra was also recorded as being in the top 5 divorce cases, namely 20,029 cases and Medan City became the city with the highest number of divorces among cities and districts in North Sumatra, with the divorce rate reaching 2,566 cases in 2020 and continuing to increase by 3,289 in in 2022.

The high death rate of fathers in Indonesia is one of the reasons why many children experience the absence of a father figure. Based on data from BPS, life expectancy for men in Indonesia is lower than for women. In Medan, life expectancy for men in 2022 will only be around 71 years, while for women it will reach around 75 years. In 2021, life expectancy for men will be around 71 years and women will be around 75 years.

Humans begin their development from birth to toddlers, children, teenagers, adults and the elderly until they finally die. Each stage of life must be passed by every human being. Early adulthood is the phase where a person reaches the peak of their development. This is the transition time from adolescence to adulthood where a person begins to become economically independent, gains the freedom to determine his own life, and has a more realistic view of the future (Humaizi et al., 2024). Hurlock in (Jahja, 2011) early adulthood starts at the age of 21 years to 40 years. Early adulthood is a period in which a person searches for, finds and strengthens their identity and enters the reproductive stage of life. It is a time filled with emotional challenges and tension, where individuals experience social isolation, face commitments, and learn to manage changing values and adapt to new lifestyles. Becoming an adult, responsibilities and roles increase. At this stage, a person accepts and accepts greater responsibilities, including in building intimate relationships. They are no longer economically, socially, or physiologically dependent on their parents (Dariyo, 2008).

Children who receive less attention and affection from their fathers tend to have limited interaction abilities (Nindhita & Pringgadani, 2023). Losing the role of a father also causes a child to feel loneliness, envy, in addition to grief and loss, which is also accompanied by low levels of self-control, initiative, and courage to take risks. (risk taking), and psychological well-being, as well as a tendency to depression (Sundari & Herdajani, 2013). Early adults with a negative self-concept experience additional challenges in determining a life partner, especially women, living a married life, and raising children (Wahyuni et al., 2023). They may have difficulty understanding and carrying out their proper roles and responsibilities, which has an impact on their interactions at work and within the extended family. On this basis, the author is interested in conducting research with the title "Communication Patterns in the Formation of Self-Concept in Early Adults Who Experience Fatherlessness in the City of Medan".

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This research looks at various views from informants regarding the situation being studied with a number of questions. The aim is to express their responses regarding the focus problem of this research. Each individual develops their own interpretation related to certain objects or situations (Ardial, 2022). Family communication forms a pattern of family life which includes aspects of education, attitude formation and children's behavior which have a significant impact on their development. Hurlock (in (Bahfiarti, 2016)). The family is a primary group where communication patterns are used differently from secondary groups. The satisfaction of family members in this group is greatly influenced by the communication patterns applied (in Sari et al., 2022). According to Leah East, fatherlessness or father absence can occur when the biological father dies, is in prison, experiences a divorce, has a high work commitment, or other reasons that cause the father's lack of presence in the child's daily life (East et al., 2006).

According to (Burns, 2006), self-concept is a mixed picture of what we think about ourselves, what other people think about us, and what we want to be like. Maria defines self-concept as the overall perception of oneself in physical, social and psychological aspects obtained from experiences and interactions with other people (Maria, 2007; Humaizi et al., 2024). Self-concept is a mixed picture of what we think other people think about us, and what we want ourselves to be like. Deddy Mulyana said that self-concept is an individual's view of who the individual is, and this can be obtained through information provided by other people regarding the individual (Mulyana, 2011).

Individuals understand and interact with their environment through social interaction. Objects in the environment, including items, qualities, events, or situations, can become part of a person's reality. Communicators not only interact with other people using social objects, but also carry out internal conversations as an important part of that interaction. When individuals talk to themselves, the goal is to differentiate between social objects and humans. In making decisions about how to act towards social objects, individuals design actions guided by attitudes or verbal statements that reflect the values related to the action (Littlejohn & Karen A. Foss, 2014).

For newborn babies alone, the father's presence has a big impact on the baby's behavior, with skin to skin actions, the baby will fall asleep faster, cry less and show less sucking (milk) behavior than babies who are only cared for in bed. (Grau et al., 2022). Lamb (in Wibiharto et al., 2021) explains that the father's role consists of three components, namely: paternal involvement, accessibility or availability, and responsibility. Sundari and Herdajani stated that parenting patterns in the family are also influenced by local culture, where the stereotype that men are not required to take care of children and cannot even be involved in the parenting process (patriarchy) is still strong (Aryanti et al., 2023).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research uses a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology can be defined as understanding that arises from awareness, the science of explaining what people perceive, feel and know in their awareness and experience at that time. In phenomenology, perception is considered the main source of knowledge, a source of certainty. However, perception will be fully concrete if it is combined with purpose (intention) and sensation (sensation) (Mulyana, 2018). Researchers reviewed in depth the phenomenon related to fatherlessness and conducted in-depth interviews with respondents, who were individuals who experienced this phenomenon directly. It is hoped that this approach can support researchers in getting the right results related to the problems faced by research subjects. The researcher hopes that through this method, he will be able to answer and explain various in-depth and personal aspects regarding the subject's communication patterns, the impact experienced by the subject on the role of fathers in early adulthood with the experiences of those who experience fatherlessness and how the self-concept is formed in them. they. Subjects in the research concept refer to sources, informants who want to ask for information and have their data extracted (Sugiyomo & Lestari, 2021). In other words, research subjects are individuals or organisms that are used as a source of information needed in collecting research data (Djamil, 2015). Determining subjects in this research used a purposive technique with criteria in accordance with research needs.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Communication Patterns in Forming the Self-Concept of Early Adults Who Experience Fatherlessness**

Communication patterns are a key element for fulfilling family functions (Thoyibah, 2021:4). Family communication patterns have an important role in forming self-concept. Each family has different communication patterns, depending on which pattern is most appropriate. A person's self-concept will be formed through social interactions. From the six informants, it was found that the communication patterns that occurred were functional. Based on Friedman (Sari, 2022), there are two aspects related to this family communication pattern;

#### **a. Functional Communication Patterns**

Communication is open and honest, where each member feels safe to express their feelings and thoughts. They listen to each other attentively and empathetically, and respect personal boundaries, which creates a balance between togetherness and independence. In addition, there is emotional support and conflicts are resolved without violence or verbal abuse. Important decisions are taken together, considering input from all relevant family members.

b. Dysfunctional Communication Patterns

In contrast, in dysfunctional communication, communication tends to be closed or dishonest, with family members hiding their feelings or problems, which creates distrust and tension. Lack of active listening often occurs, where attention to what other family members say is ignored. Personal boundaries are not respected, leading to insecurity and lack of privacy. Emotional support is minimal, with family members criticizing or belittling each other. Conflicts are resolved in destructive ways, such as shouting or even physical violence, worsening relationships and individual well-being. Decision making is authoritarian or chaotic, without effective communication. Recognizing and correcting dysfunctional communication patterns is important for improving the quality of relationships and overall family well-being.

The findings of the first informant, IL, were that the communication pattern that occurred in the family was a dysfunctional communication pattern as defined by the definition that the communicator and the communicant did not reach an understanding. The family consists of father, mother and children as one unit that cannot be separated so that when the parental roles are unbalanced, dysfunctional communication occurs. Communication patterns that continue like this continuously give rise to IL's self-concept which is timid, pessimistic, often doubts his abilities and has difficulty communicating. Even so, IL is still trying to improve himself and hopes to become a person who is easier to get along with.

In line with what was expressed by the previous informant, the communication pattern shown by Novi in her surrounding environment was also the effect of a dysfunctional family communication pattern, where she no longer had the role of her father due to her father having died. Since being abandoned by her father, Novi has had feelings of shame that have accumulated into a closed person. Even so, the communication between Novi and her mother went well, as did her interaction with her siblings. Novi often chats in normal situations with simple topics such as asking if you have eaten. According to his mother, Novi is also a good child and always listens to advice without arguing. However, Novi herself sees herself as a pessimistic, introverted person who has difficulty communicating.

Karin's family communicates openly and has a close and open relationship with her mother and siblings. However, researchers still categorize the pattern that occurs in Karin's family as dysfunctional because the role of the father is gone. Even though there is a missing role in the family, Karin's mother is able to play a dual role in giving extra attention to Karin and her siblings, making Karin feel less like she has lost her father figure. Her mother described Karin as a cheerful and enthusiastic child. In his family, communication runs well and is open, although there are occasional misunderstandings that are resolved. In her environment, Karin has good relationships with her friends and often spends time with them. As an extrovert, Karin feels more alive when interacting with other people and gets bored if she stays at home too often. Overall, Karin is satisfied with herself at the moment and doesn't feel the need to change much. He sees himself as someone who is sociable, cheerful and full of enthusiasm. With

an extroverted personality, Karin feels comfortable interacting with many people and continues to strive to develop. Karin is an optimistic and enthusiastic person, feeling confident about her success in the future. Furthermore, from the researchers' observations, Karin's partner also played a big role in many of the decisions taken by Karin. Apart from that, Dirgan as a triangulation informant said that Karin had difficulty making choices and tended to follow the flow of her friends more often. This is in accordance with what was stated by **Light** (2024) that daughters who lack the role of father will look for alternative role models and have an impact in making decisions.

The results of interviews with informant Manda also showed that there was dysfunctional communication in the family. Manda has a bad relationship with her mother, even to the point of being like a stranger. Her mother described Manda in a very negative light, calling her a child who did not know herself and did not know how to benefit. He still lives at home with his mother and younger siblings, but communication is very minimal and perfunctory. After her father died, Manda felt a change in her life, she became happier coming home late at night and became a smoker.

In the lecture environment, Manda did not have many friends, especially among women. He is more familiar with male friends, although the relationship is not too deep. On the other hand, at work, Manda feels more accepted and has many friends who understand her. As a result of this dysfunctional communication pattern, Manda always feels very insecure and pessimistic, often doubting the praise given to her. He felt that the bad words from his mother and the loss of his father had affected his view of himself, making him feel worthless and unappreciated. Manda feels that she is pessimistic, not good, evil, not sociable, and not fun. Even though her partner and friends sometimes praise her, Manda tends to not believe it and feels that the praise is excessive.

Clara also shows dysfunctional communication patterns due to the absence of a father's role in her family, even though she has good interactions with other family members. The absence of her father for Clara and her siblings has even become the subject of jokes within the family. Clara and her family support each other because they realize that there is no male protective figure in the family. For her mother, Clara was like a discussion partner in raising her younger siblings. Meanwhile, for her younger siblings, Clara is considered a role model because of her brilliant academic achievements and career. In the social sphere, Clara feels comfortable hanging out with men because of the absence of a father figure in her life, but she still has close female friends. Clara realized that she tended to be suspicious of new people and had difficulty trusting other people, even though after getting close she would be very kind to her friends. Clara describes herself as an optimistic, perfectionist, stubborn, independent and hard worker. Although sometimes he is less sensitive to the feelings of other people outside his friendship. He realized his desire to change to be more sensitive towards others, but admitted that change was not easy and required great effort.

Desima has a complex relationship with her family. After her parents divorced, Desima and her siblings lived at her grandparents' house before her father finally remarried. His father's second marriage caused a change in his father's behavior, which seemed more indifferent towards Desima and her sister. Not long after, Desima's father died. Currently, Desima only lives alone with her sister. Desima also admitted that the relationship between other family members became less close because communication only occurred if the family contacted them first. In terms of social relations, Desima used to often spend time with her boyfriend when they were both in Medan, but now it is less frequent because her boyfriend has moved from Medan. Relationships with friends are also not too intense, only meeting when going out together. Desima is known as a cheerful person who easily socializes with new people. Desima realized that as a result of experiencing fatherlessness, she had difficulty expressing her emotions and tended to cry when angry or disappointed, and had difficulty expressing her feelings. Because she doesn't have a father, Desima feels she needs a protector, so she becomes very dependent on her boyfriend. For him, his girlfriend is someone who can protect him, make him feel safe and not afraid to go anywhere. Desima's fear was reduced, and her sense of emptiness was filled. For Desima, her future partner must not be a rude person, and be able to protect and pamper Desima because she didn't get that before. Desima also easily wavers in her opinions when faced with people who have different views. According to Desima, from her partner's perspective, she is known as a spoiled person, while her friends see her as cheerful, easy to get along with, and a good listener.

#### **Self-Disclosure of Early Adults Who Experience Fatherlessness**

Self-disclosure is a process in which a person voluntarily reveals personal information about himself to others. The information shared is usually in the form of thoughts, feelings, experiences, beliefs or personal facts that other people may not yet know. Self-disclosure is an important aspect in communicating and maintaining close and intimate relationships (Hasan, 2016). The phenomenon of self-disclosure in early adult individuals who experience fatherlessness shows that the absence of a father figure influences the way they build and maintain emotional relationships. They tend to look for a substitute figure or emotional support in the form of a mother, girlfriend or close friend, who can provide the security and support they need. This selective and cautious self-disclosure reflects their efforts to protect themselves from potential disappointment and betrayal, as well as seeking emotional stability in relationships they consider safe and trustworthy.

## **Communication Barriers Perceived by Early Adults Who Experience Fatherlessness**

Communication within the family plays an important role in the emotional and social development of an individual. Family is the first environment where a person learns how to interact, express themselves, and understand other people. In practice, communication in an intact family can still experience obstacles, especially for a child who is fatherless. Joseph A. Devito states that there are four types of communication barriers, namely (Devito, J. A, 2016: 30), Physical noise, Physiological Noise, Psychological Noise, and Semantic Noise.

Based on the results of the interviews, it was found that the communication barriers experienced by the six informants were psychological barriers or psychological noise. IL showed psychological barriers when he felt afraid to speak because he was worried about a negative response, which was also influenced by his childhood experience with his father who often refuted his opinions. Novi faces psychological obstacles caused by her introverted personality, which makes her feel anxious and uncomfortable when she has to interact with many people. Manda also displays similar psychological barriers, with doubts and fears about how others will respond or receive what she says. Clara, who admits to having difficulty showing affection, displays complex psychological barriers that can be attributed to the absence of a father in her life, which impacts the way she expresses emotions and care. Desima, although she does not feel she experiences major obstacles in daily communication, faces psychological obstacles in expressing negative emotions, which often results in crying rather than verbal confrontation.

The results of this interview are also in line with the results of previous similar research conducted by Afidatul Khasanah (2023) with the title "Communication Patterns in Female Students in Early Adult Age with Broken Home Families (Case Study at the Ar-Rois Islamic Boarding School, Pulutan, Salatiga City" where the research conducted he did show that there are problems in early adulthood, such as problems with independence, blurred identity caused by excessive parenting from parents, and a tendency to be easily influenced by the surrounding environment. Psychological factors that influence communication barriers show that these factors have a significant impact on communication barriers, because the subject tends to stop the ongoing conversation or leave the chat if the topic is not in accordance with what is desired. Communication patterns in broken home families include a low level of openness, communication that is command in nature, as well as an imbalance in communication that is dominated by one member family.

If related to previous research, the results of this research are also in line with research conducted by Regina & Ratriana (2022) entitled Description of Self-Esteem of Early Adult Women Who Experience Fatherlessness Due to Parental Divorce, which states that there are different images of self-esteem. arising from individuals (Wendi & Kusmiati, 2022). The factors that influence the formation of self-esteem the most are the social environment, family environment, and gender. Meanwhile, research conducted by researchers resulted that the self-

concept formed in early adults who experience fatherlessness generally shows a self-concept that tends to be negative, but this also varies and is not completely negative. There is also the influence of other family members such as mother, siblings in the formation of this self-concept.

Based on the results found in this research and looking at previous similar research, the researcher concluded that there has been no similar research that examines communication patterns in the formation of the self-concept of early adults who experience fatherlessness. Most research on fatherlessness focuses on psychological aspects and not communication, therefore researchers assume that this is novelty. And researchers hope that this research will be able to provide an overview and solution to existing problems.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Communication patterns in the family are very important for the formation of an individual's self-concept. Every family has different communication patterns, and these patterns influence how individuals develop self-confidence and self-esteem. The absence of a father causes the emergence of dysfunctional communication patterns in the family which affects various aspects of the informants' lives such as communication with the surrounding environment and their self-concept. Four of the six informants all showed difficulty in communicating, low self-confidence, and tended to be pessimistic. It can be concluded that a supportive and open communication pattern in the family can help individuals develop a strong sense of self-confidence, while a critical or inattentive pattern can cause low self-confidence. Understanding the role of communication is very important in supporting individuals who experience fatherlessness in forming an identity and achieving independence and maturity. The self-disclosure of early adults who experience father absence is influenced by five main dimensions: accuracy, motivation, time, intensity, and depth and breadth. Individuals choose carefully who they open up to, influenced by internal and external motivations, as well as appropriate circumstances and timing. Self-disclosure also depends on the intensity and depth of their relationships with other people. This phenomenon shows that the absence of a father figure makes them more selective and careful in building emotional relationships, seeking support from substitute figures such as mothers, girlfriends, or close friends to gain a sense of security and emotional stability. Communication barriers due to the lack of father's presence during childhood lead to psychological communication barriers in early adulthood, such as fear of having an opinion or difficulty expressing emotions appropriately. This shows the important role of parents in providing support and positive communication models during a child's development. The family has an important role in a person's emotional and social development. The presence of a father in the family can provide the example and guidance needed to develop healthy communication skills. For future researchers, it can be explored further by conducting research that looks at it from the perspective of male sources. Apart from that, this research will later be able to increase and expand knowledge in

conducting research related to communication and fatherless issues by using different theoretical scopes or with different locations.

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