

The unreliable father effect: intrapersonal communication as identity pillar for fatherless daughters

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Abstract This study explored the intrapersonal communication dynamics of fatherless girls in facing life struggles using intrapersonal communication theory. A descriptive qualitative method was used with purposive sampling to select informants. Data analysis followed the five stages by Colaizzi and Moustakas: initial stage, horizontalisation, clustering meanings, essence description, and reporting. Data was collected by conducting observation and in-depth interviews with five informants residing near Jakarta, then transcribed and analysed using NVIVO 14. The research results indicate that fatherlessness, particularly within the unreliable father category, affects self-perception—causing insecurity, low self-esteem, and indecisiveness. Despite similar backgrounds, each informant experienced unique impacts. With sufficient understanding of intrapersonal communication, the informants developed self-defence mechanisms to face pressures and challenges. This study highlights the role of intrapersonal communication as a psychological coping tool that helps fatherless girls adapt and build resilience in their lives.

Keywords: fatherless daughter; identity; intrapersonal communication model

INTRODUCTION

The impact of fatherlessness profoundly influences child development, manifesting in both external behaviours and internal psychological states. In the Indonesian context, the scale of this issue is critical; experts from Universitas Gadjah Mada estimate that approximately 15.9 million children experience absence of their fathers, a condition significantly affecting their cognitive and emotional development (Hidayat, 2025). This aligns with broader global findings, where recent comprehensive reviews of literature confirm that children growing up without fathers face multifaceted challenges, ranging from educational hurdles to acute mental health vulnerabilities (Kucukkaragoz, 2025).

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However, beyond these observable metrics, father absence strikes at the core of a child's internal world. While previous studies often emphasise juvenile delinquency or social maladjustment, newer scholarship directs attention to the self. Research by (Ramatsetse & Ross, 2023) explicitly highlights that the absence of a father figure creates a 'void' in a daughter's sense of belonging, which fundamentally disrupts her identity construction and self-esteem. This finding is pivotal, as self-esteem serves as the foundation for intrapersonal communication. Consequently, the lack of paternal validation alters the internal dialogue through which these daughters interpret their worth, shifting the research focus from external social dynamics to the internal communicative processes of the self (Peng et al., 2024).

A meta-analytic review in child psychiatry and human development (Xu & Zheng, 2022) demonstrates that children and adolescents raised without consistent paternal involvement exhibit significantly higher levels of externalising behaviours, including aggression, rule-breaking, and conduct problems. Similarly, research in attachment and human development (Stern et al., 2024) indicates that limited paternal attachment security during early adolescence predicts later behavioural dysregulation and heightened susceptibility to peer-related delinquency. Expanding this perspective, (Osinga et al., 2024), in the *Journal of Family Psychology*, report that non-residential fatherhood is associated with increased behavioural instability and difficulties in emotional regulation among adolescents and young adults. Cross-cultural findings further reveal that father absenteeism correlates with destructive behavioural patterns and elevated risks of youth violence, particularly in socioeconomically vulnerable contexts (Jay Whittaker, 2025). Complementing these studies, through a systematic global review, conclude that structural father absence consistently predicts maladaptive adolescent outcomes, including antisocial tendencies and social disengagement (Erwinda et al., 2025). Collectively, these findings reinforce the argument that fatherlessness extends beyond emotional deprivation, functioning as a structural risk factor in the development of juvenile behavioural disturbances. However, while these studies robustly document external manifestations of behavioural risk, they seldom interrogate the internal communicative mechanisms through which such vulnerabilities are cognitively and emotionally processed. This gap underscores the necessity of examining intrapersonal communication as a mediating process in identity formation among fatherless daughters.

The phenomenon of children experiencing limitations in paternal roles can also be seen in social dynamics. For example, some reports indicate that father absence can contribute to juvenile delinquency and criminal problems amongst young people, as they tend to seek figures of authority and validation outside the home that may have negative impacts on their lives. Research by Nasution, Rahayu, and Cameliana found that children from commuter marriage families experiencing fatherlessness showed difficulties in following lessons at school and adapting to school life, often needing maternal accompaniment and demonstrating limited social interaction patterns (Nasution et al., 2023). The absence of father figures for daughters can profoundly affect communication dynamics, creating new challenges and opportunities in interactions amongst family members. Effective communication within families depends on active involvement from all members, including father figures, who often serve as mediators and guides in discussion and conflict resolution.

Research conducted by Michael and colleagues states that the absence of father figures can change how family members communicate, often resulting in shifts in communication patterns that may be less balanced and can affect daughters' abilities to resolve conflicts constructively (Walsh et al., 2021). The absence of father figures for daughters can provide significant social and psychological impacts, especially for children. In Indonesia, research by Anindita reveals that the absence of paternal roles can disturb children's emotional balance, which often leads to behavioural problems and academic performance decline (Anindita, 2019). Moreover, Popenoe also states that children without fathers often experience limitations in developing social skills, which can hinder their ability to build healthy relationships with others in the future (Popenoe, 2019).

From a psychological perspective, father absence can cause deep feelings of loss and anxiety in children, especially when they witness peers having strong relationships with their fathers (Jumiati, 2025). As stated in 2021 research, children in families without fathers often must face challenges in developing stable self-identity, which can impact their emotional well-being in adulthood (Setyawan, 2017). Further, in Indonesia, research conducted by Setyawan shows

that although paternal roles in families are increasingly minimal, strong support from mothers and the surrounding environment can still provide positive impacts, although not fully replacing the father's role (Setyawan, 2017).

Additionally, the phenomenon of limited father involvement in families has become increasingly prevalent amid persistent patriarchal norms in Indonesia. Anindita (2019) highlights how these cultural structures position fathers primarily as economic providers, while mothers assume primary childcare responsibilities. Complementing this, a KPAI survey cited by Setyawan (2017) reveals fathers average only one hour of daily communication with children, while Indonesian Statistic Agency (BPS) data from 2021 indicates only 37.17% of children aged 0-5 years are raised by both parents simultaneously, underscoring the national scale of paternal absence (BPS, 2021).

The fatherless phenomenon in Indonesia attracts attention, especially considering that although fathers and mothers are bound in marriage, the father's role in childcare is often neglected. To confirm that this phenomenon represents the root of research problems, Rosenthal's research findings in 2010 categorised six causes of children being included in fatherless conditions: (a) The Disapproving Father or critical father, (b) The Mentally Ill Father or father with mental illness, (c) The Substance-Abusing Father or father with substance dependence, (d) The Abusive Father or father who commits violence, (e) The Unreliable Father or unreliable father, and (f) The Absent Father or absent father (Rosenthal, 2010). The fatherless phenomenon occurring in Indonesia is largely caused by such conditions.

In a family, there are typically father, mother, and children, also known as the nuclear family. Parents have responsibilities to educate, care for, and guide their children so they can achieve certain developmental stages. Parenting patterns conducted collaboratively by fathers and mothers are considered the best method to support children's growth and development (Ratliff et al., 2023). This research focused on the dynamics faced by daughters growing up without the presence of a father (fatherless). The topic of fatherlessness has recently come into the spotlight, considering the imbalance of roles in childcare (Febriani & Iswinarti, 2025).

When discussing families with children, communication plays not only a role in overcoming problems and resolving conflicts but also serves as a solid foundation for children's emotional and psychological development (Avitasari & Sulistyarin, 2024). Children learn how to express their feelings, manage emotions, and interact with others through communication processes with parents and siblings. Healthy communication within families not only strengthens bonds between parents and children but also helps children form their personal identities (Nasir & Johari, 2024). According to Olson and Goral in their 2021 research, communication in families plays more than just a tool for problem-solving; it also facilitates the formation of social roles and individual identity within the family (Dunst, 2021). In this process, children learn to understand their roles in families and in society, as well as develop a deeper understanding of themselves.

When discussing relationships between parents and children, it is important to understand that families constitute the first and most fundamental learning environment for children (Wang, 2023). Before children begin formal education at school, where they will receive knowledge in more structured and systematic ways, families are places where more informal, yet essential learning processes occur. Within families, parents, specifically fathers and mothers, play roles not only as protectors and caregivers but also as the first teachers and educators (Roostin, 2018). Since children are born, parents begin teaching various values, skills, and basic knowledge that are very important for their development. This process continues from childhood until children reach adulthood (Furqon, 2026).

Communication between parents and children forms a critical element in family dynamics, strengthening relationships and fostering trust. Research findings suggest that families cultivating open communication patterns create environments conducive to children's cognitive and emotional development (Rahmah, 2018). Effective parental communication also signals acceptance and emotional security, meeting fundamental needs for children to thrive psychologically and socially (Rahmah, 2018).

The father's role in child development is very crucial, as it can influence cognitive, social-emotional, moral values, language, and artistic aspects in children (Setyawan, 2017). Fathers function as role models who will become references for children in assessing others' behaviour towards them in the future. Riani, quoting Hurlock, states that immaturity in family relationships

during adolescence can cause psychological disturbances. At this stage, children, both boys and girls, often experience self-distrust related to unstable physical, cognitive, and emotional conditions, so they need encouragement and protection from families to support their development (Riani, 2023).

Moreover, in psychology, father involvement in childcare is known as father involvement, such as fathers' participation in carrying out childcare tasks as well as providing psychological and emotional support (Jacobs & Kelley, 2006). Fathers play important roles in guiding children at every stage of their development, whether physically, mentally, or socially. Ulfah in her research emphasises that fathers' active roles in childcare can provide significant positive influence on child development, especially in forming emotional intelligence and children's ability to face future challenges, indicating that fathers who frequently communicate with their children tend to foster closer and more trusting relationships, which ultimately enhance the wellbeing of all family members (Arifudin & Ulfah, 2013). Thus, effective communication between fathers and children not only strengthens emotional bonds but also supports children's social and psychological development in modern family contexts.

In Indonesia, patriarchal cultural norms traditionally position fathers primarily as economic providers, while mothers shoulder most domestic responsibilities, including childcare (Anindita, 2019). This division often results in limited paternal engagement, with research from Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) indicating that fathers spend an average of only one hour per day in meaningful communication with their children (Setyawan, 2017). Such minimal interaction hinders daughters' emotional development and identity formation, as it deprives them of paternal validation essential for healthy intrapersonal communication.

A 2022 study by psychologists at Universitas Gadjah Mada further underscores this issue, highlighting Indonesia's elevated rates of father absence and its detrimental effects on children's emotional and social growth (UGM, 2023). The research emphasises that low paternal involvement disrupts daughters' self-concept construction, creating internal psychological voids that manifest in identity struggles—directly relevant to understanding intrapersonal communication dynamics in a fatherless context.

Daughters growing up without father figures, especially in Generation Z contexts, face complex emotional and psychological challenges (Setyawan, 2017). The fatherless phenomenon can impact self-identity development, self-confidence, and children's ability to interact socially (Susanti & Ariyati, 2024). Generation Z, born in the era of technology and globalisation, has wide access to information, yet fatherless conditions still affect their personal relationships and intrapersonal communication (Novita et al., 2025). One struggle faced by fatherless Generation Z daughters is the problem of self-identity formation. Without the presence of fathers as figures who traditionally become protective figures and role models, they often feel they have lost footing in seeking self-identity (Rossall & Arianti, 2025).

Previous research shows that father absence can trigger high feelings of insecurity and self-doubt. Children who lose father figures tend to experience difficulties in developing self-confidence and have higher dependence on external validation. In the context of fatherless daughters, they may be more vulnerable to experiencing identity confusion, especially when entering adolescence and early adulthood, phases where they begin forming romantic and social relationships (Ashari, 2017). Click or tap here to enter text. Father presence plays an important role in providing security and emotional support, which if lost, can worsen internal struggles.

From ten studies that researchers have examined and summarised regarding fatherless conditions, it was found that this condition impacts communication patterns and dynamics in fatherless daughters. However, all existing research focuses on perspectives or fields of psychology and also interpersonal communication. Based on these findings, researchers feel motivated to investigate further whether fatherless conditions also affect individual communication dynamics or intrapersonal communication in fatherless daughters' selves, beyond the psychological influences that have been previously examined (Poernomo et al., 2024).

Intrapersonal communication is internal dialogue that occurs within a person, such as talking to oneself or perceiving the environment. This includes observing, understanding, and solving problems in the mind, as well as playing important roles in human behavioural perception (Imam Pratama & Ali, 2025). Meanwhile, interpersonal communication is a face-to-

face interaction that allows verbal and nonverbal reactions from interlocutors. Intrapersonal communication refers to the internal dialogue that individuals have with themselves, shaping their self-concept, emotions, and decision-making processes. This type of communication is essential in how individuals interpret and respond to external stimuli, particularly in the absence of significant figures like fathers (Putri et al., 2025). According to research by Simbolon et al. (2023), intrapersonal communication influences how individuals perceive themselves and their emotional responses to challenges. In the context of father absence, daughters may experience less constructive self-talk, leading to difficulties in emotional management and self-regulation.

A study by Nasution et al. (2023) found that individuals with absent fathers often report lower levels of self-esteem and struggle with emotional regulation, which can hinder their interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, the absence of a father figure can disrupt daughters' internal communication processes, making it harder for them to effectively resolve conflicts and manage stress (Sari, 2025). This highlights the importance of exploring intrapersonal communication to understand the long-term psychological impacts of father absence on daughters' emotional and social development (Brown, 2018). Jalaludin Rakhmat states that if viewed from communication psychology, the understanding of inner communication is information processing that includes sensing, perception, memory, and thought. Research on self-communication tends to receive less attention, except in behavioural psychology fields, so its literature is limited.

Given Indonesia's high prevalence of father absence amid entrenched patriarchal norms, as evidenced by national surveys showing limited paternal involvement (BPS, 2021; Setyawan, 2017) the issue demands scholarly attention. While prior research has extensively examined psychological and interpersonal effects, intrapersonal communication dynamics in fatherless daughters remain underexplored. This study addresses this gap through a phenomenological approach, investigating self-dialogue processes in identity construction. With that question as the basis and armed with previous research raising similar topics regarding fatherlessness and its impacts, researchers decided to apply qualitative methods through phenomenological studies. This research is titled 'The unreliable father effect: intrapersonal communication as identity pillar for fatherless daughters'.

Based on the description contained in the background, the research problem that the researchers wish to explore is: How do intrapersonal communication dynamics function in fatherless daughters experiencing struggle? This research has both theoretical and practical objectives. Theoretically, this research aims to: (1) Develop theoretical understanding regarding how father figure absence affects intrapersonal communication processes in daughters, particularly in self-identity formation contexts; (2) Explain the important role of intrapersonal communication in helping fatherless daughters overcome internal conflicts and emotional struggles related to father absence; (3) Integrate intrapersonal communication theory with developmental psychology concepts to explore emotional and mental dynamics experienced by daughters without father presence; (4) Compile theoretical frameworks that can map relationships between father absence, self-identity formation, and intrapersonal communication development, which can become foundations for further research in communication and social psychology fields.

Practically, this research aims to: (1) Provide insights to fatherless daughters about ways to manage and overcome emotional struggles they experience in daily life through understanding intrapersonal communication; (2) Analyse struggles or emotional struggles experienced by daughters without father figure presence in self-identity formation processes; (3) Examine the impact of father absence on intrapersonal communication development from communication theory and developmental psychology perspectives; (4) Offer practical strategies to improve mental and emotional health of fatherless daughters by focusing on internal conflict management and development of healthy relationships with themselves.

This research offers concrete theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions to communication studies. Theoretically, it develops an intrapersonal coping model illustrating how fatherless daughters leverage self-dialogue for identity reconstruction and emotional regulation. Methodologically, it advances phenomenological inquiry through NVivo-assisted qualitative analysis of lived experiences. Practically, findings provide counselling insights for psychologists and family therapists supporting these daughters' mental health and self-concept development.

Practically, this research is expected to provide insights for fatherless daughters to better understand and manage their internal struggles through healthier intrapersonal communication. This research can also become guidance for mothers or other caregivers in supporting the psychological development of daughters growing up without a father presence. Additionally, research findings can become references for counsellors, psychologists, and communication practitioners in designing more effective intervention strategies in supporting fatherless daughters facing emotional and social challenges. This research can also increase public awareness about the importance of intrapersonal communication roles in child development, especially in family contexts experiencing structural changes such as father absence.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilised a qualitative methodology, adopting a phenomenological approach to understand human behaviour from the participants' own point of view. This involved gathering data on social phenomena. A qualitative methodology serves as a method for outlining, exploring, and comprehending the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social or human matters (Creswell, 2016). Whilst phenomenology constitutes a meticulous, systematic, and analytical examination of a phenomenon, the primary objective of this strategy is to articulate the structure of a lived experience. This line of inquiry commences with a phenomenon of interest and seeks to comprehend the subjective significance of that lived experience (Creswell, 2013). In this research, the phenomenological approach provides researchers with the opportunity to explore participants' experiences of fatherlessness and internal struggles in detail and depth. This approach also allows researchers to explore the perceptions and meanings of how participants view phenomena related to intrapersonal communication dynamics in fatherless daughters.

Descriptive phenomenology enables researchers to capture informants' pure experiences without excessive researcher interpretation, focusing on 'what was experienced' and 'how the experience was lived' (Creswell, 2013). In this study, Colaizzi's seven-step method was systematically applied: (1) thorough reading of transcripts, (2) extraction of significant statements, (3) formulation of meaning statements, (4) clustering of themes, (5) comparison of themes across transcripts, (6) writing exhaustive descriptions, and (7) member-checking verification with informants.

The research subjects comprise Generation Z women aged 21-27 experiencing *unreliable father* conditions, selected via purposive sampling based on their lived struggles with identity formation due to paternal emotional absence. Five informants were recruited, as phenomenological inquiry prioritises depth over breadth; this sample size enables comprehensive analysis until thematic saturation is achieved—where recurring intrapersonal communication patterns emerge without new thematic insights (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach ensures robust capture of the essential structures underlying their self-dialogue and psychological resilience.

Interview setting and confidentiality: Semi-structured interviews were conducted in private, comfortable settings chosen by participants—either face-to-face in neutral locations or via secure online platforms (WhatsApp video)—each lasting 60-90 minutes to ensure depth while respecting participants' comfort. All interviews were audio-recorded with consent, and participants were assured complete confidentiality through pseudonyms and secure data storage.

This research applied in-depth interviews and observations to collect data (See Table 1). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five purposively selected informants (aged 21-27) experiencing *unreliable father* conditions, either face-to-face or via secure WhatsApp video based on participant preference. Main interview themes comprised: Theme 1 - Understanding of Fatherlessness and Its Impacts; Theme 2 - Comprehension and Intrapersonal Communication Patterns of Informants; and Theme 3 - Exploration of Struggle Period Experiences and Defence Mechanisms. Pre-prepared questions allowed probing for deeper insights when responses warranted further exploration. Complementing this, participant observation spanned four months (September-December 2023), systematically documenting daily behavioural indicators of intrapersonal communication, including self-talk moments, emotional regulation strategies, non-verbal cues of internal dialogue (e.g., prolonged silences during father-related topics), and

patterns of social withdrawal or compensatory behaviours linked to identity struggles, with field notes capturing contextual nuances to enrich the interview.

Table 1. List of informants

Initial / Age	Fatherless Category	Location
RM / 23 years	Unreliable Father	Jakarta
ED / 27 years	Unreliable Father	Jakarta
YC / 26 years	Unreliable Father	Jakarta
AO / 21 years	Unreliable Father	Jakarta
A / 27 years	Unreliable Father	Jakarta

Source: Field data result, (2025)

This study utilised a thematic analysis informed by the phenomenological stages of Colaizzi and Moustakas. The study utilised a thematic analysis informed by the phenomenological stages of Colaizzi and Moustakas. This study employed thematic analysis following the phenomenological framework adapted by Creswell (2013) from Colaizzi and Moustakas, systematically progressing through five stages: (1) transcription of interview recordings, (2) horizontalisation to identify relevant statements, (3) meaning clustering into thematic categories using NVivo 14 coding, (4) essence description synthesising core phenomenological structures, and (5) results reporting linking findings to theory. Theme validation involved member checking, where informants reviewed preliminary findings for accuracy and peer debriefing with two communication scholars, ensuring interpretive rigor without requiring intercoder reliability typical of quantitative paradigms. Iterative review cycles confirmed theme stability across the dataset

The researchers developed codes based on the informants' language during the open coding phase. NVIVO 14 facilitated the organisation of codes and the formulation of significant categories for reporting the results. The following are the themes identified for this research, as per Figure 1.

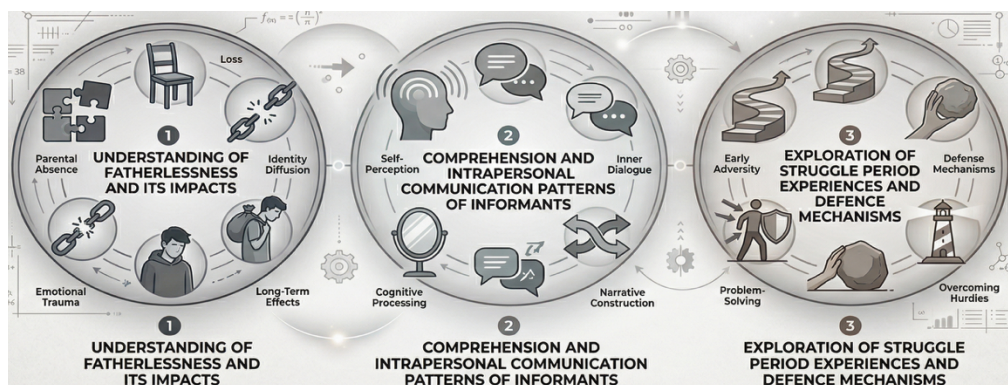


Figure 1. The themes of research
 Source: Field data results (2025)

To ensure data trustworthiness, this study employed source triangulation following Lincoln & Guba, (1985) naturalistic inquiry framework, cross-verifying findings across multiple data sources rather than relying on singular perspectives. Specifically, primary data from in-depth interviews with five informants were systematically compared against four months of participant observation field notes and secondary sources, including academic literature, fatherlessness studies, and relevant policy documents. This multi-method convergence established pattern consistency—where recurrent intrapersonal communication themes (e.g., self-dialogue during identity struggles) appeared across interviews, observed behaviours, and existing scholarship—enhancing interpretive credibility without quantitative validation measures.

Following the transcription of the interview data, the transcripts were provided to each participant for their review. This served two purposes. Firstly, it aimed to verify that the researchers had correctly understood the information shared by the participants during the interview. Secondly, it offered participants an opportunity to amend their responses. This member checking process ensured that informants' voices and experiences were accurately represented in the research findings, thereby enhancing the credibility and authenticity of the phenomenological investigation. When participant accounts aligned with established research findings, confidence in data validity increased.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The meaning of the fatherless condition and its impacts

In this research, the researcher focused on informants who have a fatherless background within the 'unreliable father' category. The researcher sought to find out what and how the informants understood the concept of being fatherless, as well as the impact they have experienced as a result of this status.

Data analysis shows that all five informants understand the fatherless condition they experience. Three of the five informants (RM, AO, and A) define fatherless as a condition where a child lacks a good emotional relationship with her father. Meanwhile, Informant ED defines it as the loss of a father figure, and Informants YC and AO add that fatherless is a state of being without a father's presence in one's life.

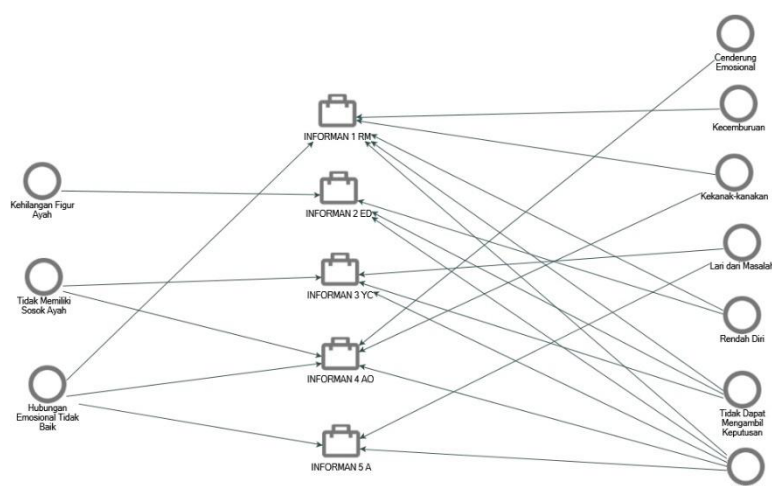


Figure 2. Parent's meaning of the fatherless condition and its impacts
 Source: Processed using NVIVO 14 (2024)

From Figure 2, the informants consistently described *fatherlessness* as an absence of meaningful emotional connection with their father, even when physically present. RM captured this paradox "In my view, fatherlessness is a condition where a child... lacks an emotional connection or potentially a close physical presence with their father... Physically, he might be there, the person is home every day, but emotionally it's hardly felt" (RM, 2024). ED framed it as a profound loss: "Fatherlessness is like losing a father figure in one's life" (ED, 2024). YC emphasised missing guidance: "Fatherlessness is like living without a father figure who can accompany and support their children's lives" (YC, 2024). AO highlighted relational breakdown: "Maybe it's not having a father figure, more like perhaps the relationship between father and child is not good" (AO, 2024). A summarised succinctly: "In my view, it's when a child can be said not to have a father, whether that be physically or emotionally" (A, 2024).

Fatherlessness profoundly disrupted informants' self-perception and intrapersonal dialogue. Lack of self-confidence emerged as a core wound, with RM revealing: "I personally became lacking in self-confidence, you know, on several occasions I felt inferior, even, because of not having a father... it's not rare for me to feel jealous of other children" (RM, 2024). AO echoed: "I personally grew up to be a child lacking in self-confidence, then psychologically it seems I matured slowly because I am still emotional" (AO, 2024).

Decision-making paralysis was equally pervasive. A described: "If I'm in a situation requiring a decision, it feels very stressful, like I just want to run away, basically I don't want to face this problem" (A, 2024). ED confessed to chronic self-doubt: "I feel that I often doubt myself and find it difficult to trust other people" (ED, 2024). YC shared avoidance patterns: "Also, when I was still a teenager, it was very frequent that if there was a problem I would instead run from the problem... it's better just to run away" (YC, 2024).

Comprehension and intrapersonal communication patterns of informants

Intrapersonal communication is a crucial mechanism for the informants in facing life's struggles as fatherless daughters. A consistent pattern was found in the dynamics of their intrapersonal communication when faced with difficult times or decision-making. All five informants (RM, ED, YC, AO, and A) begin the process with self-reflection. This takes various forms, from taking time to be calm and contemplate, to speaking to themselves in front of a mirror to understand their feelings. The next stage is self-motivation, where four of the five informants convince themselves that what is happening is part of life's process that will lead to their maturation. To conclude, two of the five informants (RM and A) use adaptation as a way to adjust to the challenges they face.

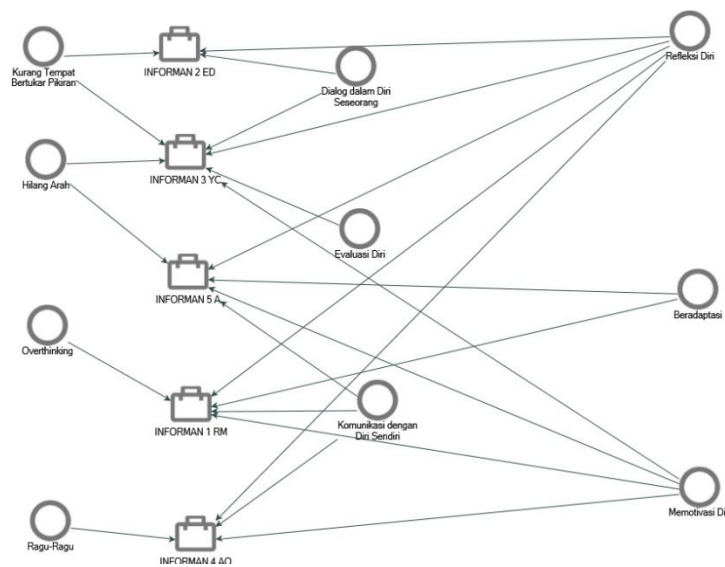


Figure 3. Understanding and patterns of intrapersonal communication
 Source: Processed using NVIVO 14, (2024)

From Figure 3, it can be concluded that 2 out of 5 fatherless daughters, namely informants ED and YC, feel that the impact of being fatherless on their decision-making leaves them uncertain about the choices they make due to a lack of someone to exchange ideas with. Additionally, 2 out of 5 informants, YC and A, also feel lost when faced with making a decision. Meanwhile, Informant 1, RM, feels she overthinks when confronted with a decision; not unlike the others, Informant 4, AO, feels she is always hesitant when she must make a choice.

So, to what extent do the informants understand what intrapersonal communication is? From the chart above, it can be deduced that 3 out of 5 informants, namely A, RM, and AO, understand intrapersonal communication as communication carried out with oneself. In contrast, 2 of the informants, ED and YC, explain that, in their view, intrapersonal communication is a dialogue that is built and conducted within ourselves.

Then, what is the pattern of communication that occurs within the informants when they are directly faced with decision-making and also when they have to go through periods of struggle in their lives? According to the data analysis conducted by the researcher, all five informants, namely RM, ED, YC, AO, and A, choose to first engage in self-reflection when experiencing difficult times or struggles, or when having to make a decision. Some choose to take a moment to calm down, while others opt to stand in front of a mirror and reflect on their feelings, and so on. For four out of five informants, motivating themselves is the next stage in their intrapersonal communication pattern; most of them will tell themselves that what is happening is part of the life process that they believe is a part of their maturation. Some see their mother as the main

motivation to get through all the struggles they are experiencing. Finally, two out of five informants, RM and A, conclude their intrapersonal communication pattern by adapting to the struggles they are currently facing.

Exploration of the struggle period experiences and defence mechanisms

Each informant has gone through unique periods of struggle. Informant RM faced family financial difficulties where her mother became the primary breadwinner. Informant ED felt pressured when choosing a university course without her father's guidance. Informant YC struggled to balance her studies with a part-time job without having anyone to confide in. Informant AO battled excessive feelings of inferiority during her teenage years, while Informant A faced pressure while writing her dissertation with minimal support from her father due to his work demands.

To get through these times, the informants developed various defence mechanisms. Three of the five informants chose to remain focused on their life goals. Support from their mothers and others around them also became a source of strength for three informants. Furthermore, reading motivational books, watching inspirational films, listening to music, and attending seminars were other ways they maintained their spirits

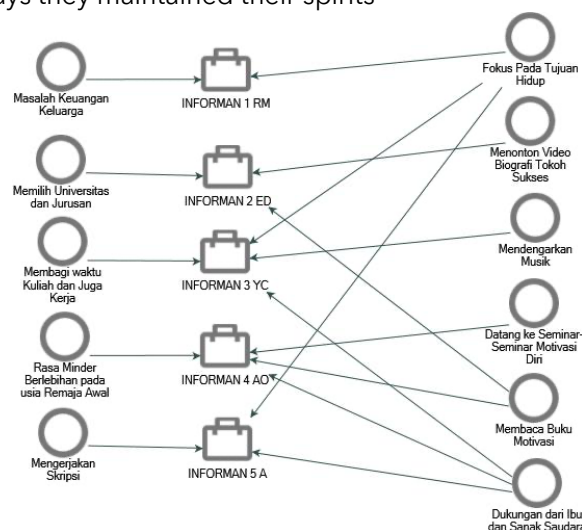


Figure 3. Exploration of struggle period experiences and defence mechanisms
 Source: Processed using NVIVO 14 (2024)

"Each informant's struggle experience reveals distinctive intrapersonal coping patterns connecting directly to their fatherless condition and emerging resilience mechanisms. RM's Financial Crisis Coping: Facing family financial collapse, where her mother became sole provider, RM felt structural family dysfunction: 'I feel like there's a structural error... Dad never did anything' (RM, 2024). Her intrapersonal response involved journaling future goals: 'I often write a journal about what I want to achieve... re-reading the journal so I can get inspired again' - embodying self-reflection → goal reaffirmation.

ED's University Decision Paralysis: Lacking paternal guidance during crucial university choice, ED felt chronically uncertain: 'Feeling not confident and not 100% sure with my choice because I haven't heard my father's opinion' (ED, 2024). She countered through inspirational media: 'Reading motivation books... watching inspiration videos about the life struggles of famous figures'. representing external validation → internalised motivation.

YC's Academic-Work Overload: Balancing college and part-time work without confidants, YC felt cognitive overload: 'My head was like bursting... having nobody, especially a father, to tell my story to' (YC, 2024). Her pattern combined multimedia motivation with maternal focus: 'Listening to music... watching motivational films... stay focused with support from my mother'. showing sensory regulation → relational reframing.

AO's Adolescent Isolation: Crippled by inferiority, AO withdrew socially: 'An excessive feeling of inferiority... others won't understand what I feel' (AO, 2024). Maternal sacrifice became her anchor: 'My motivation comes from seeing my mother's struggle... my mother has never

disappointed me' alongside seminars/biographies - demonstrating maternal idealisation → aspirational modelling.

A's Thesis Emotional Exhaustion: Underestimating thesis demands despite perceived maturity, A craved paternal validation: 'I feel like something is missing because my father rarely asks about me' (A, 2024). She relied on expanded social networks: 'Support from family, relatives, and friends... high dreams and a wishlist'. reflecting network diversification → goal visualisation."

CONCLUSION

This research indicates that daughters experiencing fatherless conditions within the 'unreliable father' category face significant psychological impacts, notably a sense of inferiority (lack of self-confidence) and difficulty in decision-making. Despite this, they actively develop intrapersonal communication as a primary defence mechanism to overcome these challenges. A consistent pattern of intrapersonal communication was identified, comprising three stages: self-reflection to understand feelings, self-motivation to persevere, and adaptation to face the situation. This internal process enables the informants to build effective self-defence strategies, such as remaining focused on life goals, seeking support from mothers and their environment, and consuming inspirational content.

Thus, it can be concluded that effective intrapersonal communication plays a crucial role for fatherless daughters, serving as both a coping mechanism and foundation for resilience. This study contributes novel insights by identifying the specific three-stage intrapersonal communication model in the Indonesian 'unreliable father' context—a phenomenon underexplored in communication studies. However, the findings are limited by the small sample size and focus on urban Jakarta participants, potentially limiting generalizability to rural or other cultural contexts. Future research should employ larger, diverse samples and longitudinal designs, while practitioners can develop targeted intrapersonal communication training programmes for at-risk adolescent girls.

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