

### ***The Role of Father with Fatherless Backgrounds in The Family***

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#### ***Abstract***

Father involvement in child upbringing has increasingly become a focus of society, along with growing awareness that the role of fathers is as significant as that of mothers in supporting children's development. This study is grounded in the social phenomenon that individuals who grow up without a father figure (fatherless) often face particular challenges when constructing their paternal roles within their own families, especially in terms of communication, emotional closeness, and parenting responsibilities. This study aims to explore patterns of interpersonal communication between fathers with a fatherless background and their children. A qualitative research design with a case study approach was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and participant observation in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of interpersonal communication between fathers and their children. The informants in this study were 5 men with a fatherless background who are currently married and have children. The findings reveal that growing up without a father figure generates a motivation for role transformation among the informants, reflected in their tendency to become more empathetic, protective, and affectionate in performing their roles as fathers. The informants demonstrate a strong desire to become better fathers than those they experienced in their childhood. In addition, the informants exhibit patterns of psychosocial compensation by engaging in more intensive interpersonal communication with their children as a means of fulfilling the affection needs that were unmet during their early life.

**Keywords:** Fatherless, Interpersonal communication, Family communication

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Parenting styles have a significant influence on the development of a child's personality in adulthood. This influence emerges because individual traits and character dispositions begin to form and become internalized during early childhood. Consequently, the parenting approaches implemented



by parents play a dominant role in shaping children's personalities from early childhood through adulthood (Djamarah, 2020).

Parenting styles refer to the habitual behaviors of parents both fathers and mothers in leading, nurturing, guiding, and communicating with their children within the family environment. Child rearing is a shared responsibility in which the roles of fathers and mothers complement one another. However, these roles are not always carried out effectively, and such inconsistencies may negatively impact a child's development. When one parental role is absent or insufficient, the overall quality of parenting becomes suboptimal. This tendency is particularly evident in patriarchal cultural contexts, where childrearing is often perceived as the mother's primary responsibility, while fathers are expected to focus on financial provision (Setiono, 2024).

The role of fathers in parenting is equally important. Mulyana (2022) argued that a father's responsibilities extend beyond providing for the family's physical needs, noting that fathers also play a crucial role in the upbringing of their children. Fathers who actively engage in parenting are better able to build meaningful emotional bonds with their children. The role of fathers in family dynamics is key in forming a strong foundation for children's growth and household stability (Muhalli, and Pathollah, 2024).

Father involvement encompasses physical, emotional, social, intellectual, moral, and authoritative dimensions. In general, father figures are associated with traits such as firmness, resilience, perseverance, and strength. These attributes complement maternal characteristics, which tend to embody gentleness, nurturance, warmth, and attentiveness. Fathers may serve as companions, protectors, encouragers, facilitators, motivators, advisors, and role models for their children (Twiningsih & Triminur, 2019). An ideal father is an active partner who engages consistently in parental duties and directly influences their children's developmental outcomes (Dagun, 2002). The existence of the father's role during the child's growth and development has a significant impact on the child's perspective of him (Kadri, 2023).

According to UNICEF (2021), approximately 20.9% of Indonesian children grow up without a father. Additionally, data from Susenas (2021) show that Indonesia has 30.38 million early childhood-aged children. Of this number, 2.67% (approximately 826,875 children) live only with their biological mothers. Another 7.04% (approximately 2,170,702 children) also live solely with their mothers due to various circumstances. In total, around 2,999,557 young children in Indonesia grow up without direct paternal presence—a substantial figure. These numbers do not include children whose fathers are physically present but emotionally unavailable, a condition commonly referred to as fatherless.

Fatherless, a term used in developmental psychology, describes children who grow and develop without the presence of a father figure. This



condition may stem from paternal death, parental divorce, or parental abandonment. Mulyana (2022) noted that many men feel unprepared to assume fatherhood roles because they lack exposure to positive paternal models during their formative years. Similarly, Dagun (2002) stated that boys' attitudes and behaviors shift when they eventually become fathers, and that the presence of a father during childhood plays an important role in preparing them for future fatherhood.

This study therefore seeks to examine how individuals who were raised without a father, develop interpersonal communication with their children within the context of parenting.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Family Communication**

In the family, communication is something that must be fostered so that family members feel a deep bond, and need each other. According to Windarwati et al (2021), family communication is an organization that uses words, body attitudes, voice intonation, actions to create image expectations, express feelings and share mutual understanding. Fiese & Winter in Windarwati et al. (2021) states that communication in the family is a medium for socializing with children, a learning medium for children, a medium for cognitive and socioemotional.

Consciously or not, in a family there is always a process of character building that will later become a provision for life for children in the social process. In other words, communication is one of the most appropriate ways to shape children's character in the family. (Hasibuan & Tambunan, 2023).

### **Interpersonal Communication**

Interpersonal communication, or communication between individuals, refers to face-to-face interaction involving two or more people, in which each participant can directly perceive the reactions to the communicator's messages, both verbally and nonverbally (Roem & Sarmiati, 2019).

According to Mulyana (2017) in general, interpersonal communication is an interaction that occurs directly between individuals, in other words, between communicators and communicants will directly receive responses from their interlocutors, both verbal and non-verbal. Interpersonal communication is an interaction that is reciprocal and direct communication has a great opportunity to know the positive or negative responses of the party being communicated with. Suwatmo and Arviana (2023) wrote that interpersonal communication is a typical and transactional form of human communication. The goal is to manage relationships with each other. Through interpersonal communication, communication interactions can be built to establish healthy relationships.



## METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this research is a qualitative approach with a case study research type. This approach was chosen because it usually provides researchers with ample opportunities or access to study the subject in depth, detail, intensively, and thoroughly.

In this research, informants were selected using purposive sampling technique. According to Yin (2002), purposive sampling is a technique in selecting informants or research subjects based on how much and relevant information they can provide. The purposive sampling method is used to obtain information and data related to the research problem and objectives. This method selects informants based on criteria that must be met by the informant (Afrizal, 2014). The subjects in this research were 5 men who have fatherless experienced and now married with children.

In this research, data were collected by conducting in-depth interviews with informants and direct observation. The data analysis technique in this research is source triangulation. The data analysis technique in this research uses the Milles & Huberman model, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

Table 1. Informants

No	Name	Occupation	Age of Child (y.o)	Age of Father (y.o)	Type of Fatherless
1.	R.T.D	Technician	7 & 5	38	Violence, father remarried
2.	S.M	Freelancer	10, 5 & 4	39	Father works abroad.
3.	A.D.K	Lecturer	9 & 4	41	Orphaned
4.	R.G	Director	7	44	Verbal violence, father absent from parenting
5.	D	Private sector Worker	7 & 6	39	Father works out of town

Source: Researcher's Data, 2025

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The informants in this study consisted of five men who had experienced fatherless and were now married with children. The findings reveal that growing up without a father figure fostered a strong drive for role transformation among the informants. This transformation is reflected in their tendency to adopt more empathetic, protective, and affectionate behaviors in fulfilling their roles as fathers.

The informants expressed a conscious effort to become better fathers than the paternal figures they experienced during their childhood. All five

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informants had encountered the absence or inadequacy of a father figure due to various circumstances, including the death of a father at the age of nine, a father working abroad for many years, a father working out of town with irregular visits, a father who perpetrated physical violence against his children and subsequently remarried, and a father who engaged in verbal violence and was not actively involved in his children's development. As a result, the informants grew up primarily under the care of their mothers.

The informants strive to become better father figures than those they experienced during their own upbringing. In addition, they demonstrate a pattern of psychosocial compensation by intensifying interpersonal communication with their children as a means of fulfilling the affection they lacked in childhood. The informants reported expressing love verbally and nonverbally to reassure both themselves and their children of their affection. They also described a need for validation from their children and partners regarding their efforts as fathers.

The informants also make deliberate efforts to be physically present and actively involved in their children's daily lives. This involvement includes allocating time to drop off and pick up their children from school, engaging in discussions about school activities and lessons, and assisting their children in understanding academic material, such as helping with homework. They also set aside dedicated time each day for casual conversation, as well as ensuring regular playtime with their children on a daily and weekly basis. In line with research conducted by Wijayanti and Fauziah (2020) states that father's involvement in carrying out his role as a father is influenced by several aspects such as the father having time to interact with the child because the father's role is not only about the quantity of time used but the quality when together.

The informants emphasized the importance of establishing effective communication with their children. All informants implemented an open communication pattern in their interactions. They made sure to engage in daily conversations on various topics a habit that has been cultivated since the children first began to speak and continues to the present day. Through this practice, the informants reported developing warmer and more connected relationships with their children. Open communication also helped them respond more effectively to their children's needs and expressions in everyday interactions. According to Breuk et al. (in Fatmasari & Sawitri, 2020) who say that closeness to the father can be seen from openness in communication.

## **VERBAL AND NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION ASPEC**

### **Words of love expression**

Based on the interviews, all informants acknowledged that they express affection verbally. Phrases such as "Ayah mencintaimu" or "Papa mencintaimu" ("I love you") are spoken to their children on a daily basis. The



informants have trained themselves not to feel embarrassed or awkward when expressing affection verbally, as they want such expressions to become a family habit—something that was nearly impossible for them during their own childhood. They described a strong personal need to communicate love through words. The informants also expressed a desire to receive verbal expressions of affection from their children in return. For them, responses such as “I love you too, Papa” or “I love you too, Daddy” serve as the validation they seek. The open communication practices that have been cultivated since early childhood have made verbal expressions of affection a natural part of their interactions with their children.

### **Physical touch**

The informants used body language to reinforce their expressions of love toward their children, such as hugging, stroking their children’s heads, kissing them, and carrying them. According to (Eaves & Leathers, 2018) non-verbal communication determines the meaning in interpersonal communication, furthermore non-verbal communication is more effective in conveying feelings and emotions than verbal communication. These forms of physical affection strengthened the verbal expressions of love communicated by the informants. Hugging was typically performed when accompanying the children to school, before bedtime, when the father returned from work, or when the father bought something the children liked.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that individuals who were raised without a father figure tend to develop a strong motivation to actively engage in parenting and to become better fathers than those they experienced during their own childhood. The absence of a paternal role model in early life does not necessarily result in disengaged fatherhood; instead, it may trigger a process of role repair characterized by heightened emotional awareness, intentional involvement, and intensified interpersonal communication with their children.

The findings reveal that informants consciously construct open, affectionate, and consistent communication patterns with their children as a form of psychosocial compensation for the emotional absence they experienced in childhood. This compensation is manifested through verbal expressions of love, nonverbal physical affection, daily dialogue, and active physical presence in children’s everyday activities. Despite facing challenges such as uncertainty, self-doubt, and lingering emotional trauma due to the lack of paternal modeling, the informants demonstrated resilience by seeking support from their partners and external parenting resources.

Overall, this study highlights that fatherhood among individuals with fatherless experiences is shaped not only by past deprivation but also by



reflective awareness, relational support, and deliberate communicative practices within the family context.

The findings of this study contribute to the field of communication studies, particularly interpersonal and family communication, by demonstrating that fatherhood communication practices are socially constructed through lived experiences rather than solely transmitted through intergenerational modeling.

Practically, this study underscores the importance of encouraging fathers, particularly those with fatherless backgrounds, to engage in open, affectionate, and consistent communication with their children.

Future studies may expand this research by involving a larger and more diverse sample to explore variations in fatherhood communication across different cultural, socioeconomic, and familial contexts.

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