

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem of The Study

Girls who grow up without their father (fatherless) tend to have a fear of rejection. This fear can create disruptions in their interactions and communications, especially when choosing a life partner (Putri et al., 2023). This is due to the significant impact that fatherlessness has on the psychological well-being of children, particularly girls. According to Sinca (2022), girls are more likely to feel the impact of losing their father compared to boys. Castetter (2020) also emphasizes that although both boys and girls experience negative consequences when growing up without a father, the psychological impact on girls tends to be more pronounced and profound than on boys.

Communication within the family environment is the most basic form of communication that a child experiences for the first time. Parents become the primary source of communication learning for children from an early age. Through effective communication, the relationship between parents and children can be well established, encouraging children to be open with their parents (Kalimau and Rina, 2023). Devito, in Kalimau and Rina (2023), also explains that effective interpersonal communication can be realized if the quality of communication is improved through five main characteristics: openness, empathy, support, positive attitude, and equality. In the context of the relationship between parents and children, the quality of communication greatly depends on how willing the child is

to be open during interactions. The higher the level of openness of the child, the greater the opportunity for openness to grow in other social relationships.

The openness of daughters towards their fathers plays a crucial role in supporting their development as they enter adulthood. Lestari in Kalimau and Rina (2023) states that the father's role is very important in supporting the development of daughters. The time spent together between father and daughter is closely related to the level of self-disclosure demonstrated by the child.

According to Johnson in Mardiyah (2020), interpersonal communication plays a crucial role in creating human happiness. This communication contributes to the intellectual and social development of individuals, as well as shaping self-identity through interactions with others. Additionally, to understand the realities around them and test the truth of their perceptions, individuals need to compare them with others' viewpoints. Moreover, a person's mental health is greatly influenced by the quality of relationships and communication established with others.

Mardiyah (2020) explains that from an early age, individuals form an understanding of themselves and society through interactions with those around them. From this process arises the concept of the generalized other, which is a collection of common expectations from many people that serves as a guideline for behavior in social life. Individuals do not only respond to the expectations of those closest to them, but also learn to adapt to social norms more broadly. The essence of self-concept is reflective ability, i.e., control, the tendency to take risks, and having higher neurotic traits, especially in girls. The fatherless condition according

to Berlian and Chitam (2023) is a situation in which a child has a father, but that father is absent or does not play an optimal role in the child's growth and development. Smith in Wae and Chandra (2024) explains that a person is said to be in a fatherless condition if they do not have a father or do not have a relationship with their father, which can be caused by divorce or parental marital issues. This definition is clarified by the explanation of Iskandar, Prasetyo, & Mulya (2023), which states that fatherless is the absence of a father figure physically, emotionally, and spiritually in someone's life.

Fatherless describes a child who grows and develops without the presence of a father, whether physically, mentally, or psychologically. The causes vary, such as the father's death, parental divorce, or an irresponsible father. Physically, fatherless means the child does not have a father living with them. The child may live with their mother, grandmother, or other caregivers. Psychologically, fatherless means the child does not have a close relationship with their father, either because the father is not involved in parenting or because the child does not feel emotionally close to their father (Wae and Chandra, 2024).

The phenomenon of fatherlessness is now a national issue in Indonesia, supported by UNICEF data from 2021 in Diana and Agustina (2023), indicating that 20.9% of children in Indonesia grow up without an active father present. Out of a total of 30.83 million children living in Indonesia, there are 2,999,577 children who have lost their father figure and no longer live with their father. Research by Ramadhana (2024) states that the quite strong patriarchal culture in Indonesian

society places the role of the father as the primary breadwinner, making their involvement in child-rearing often sidelined.

According to research by Yusriyah et al. (2024), a father's participation in parenting has a significant impact on a child's development, including cognitive development, emotional and mental health, social skills, physical health, and reducing the risk of negative impacts on individual development. When entering early adulthood, one faces a period of crisis known as intimacy versus isolation. Intimacy here is the ability of a person to integrate their identity with that of others without feeling a loss of self-identity. A person is considered to have good and mature intimacy if they are able and willing to trust others. Achieving this intimacy requires sacrifice, compromise, and a high level of commitment, which usually develops during adolescence through the formation of a good self-identity.

According to Erikson (1989), self-identity is a person's awareness in understanding their position and giving meaning to their life, enabling them to achieve a cohesive and lasting self-image to discover who they truly are. A person's self is influenced by the subconscious ego as well as the social and cultural factors around them. The lack of a father figure in a woman's life not only affects their relationship with their father but also shapes how they view themselves, connect with others, and construct meanings about family and marriage (Husna and Adri, 2025).

Someone with a low level of intimacy entering early adulthood tends to experience isolation, which is the inability to establish good relationships with others that can lead to damage to their personality, such as refusing to connect with

new people, ignoring others, or even lashing out at things that frustrate them. Thus, the loss of a father's role can make individuals struggle to build relationships, especially with the opposite sex, as well as the emergence of depressive symptoms and low self-esteem (Yusriyah, et al., 2024).

Diana and Agustina (2023) in their research showed that daughters who lose their father figure will experience negative impacts such as feelings of abandonment, as this is due to the children never having the guidance needed from their fathers, leading them to learn to survive on their own. They also struggle to manage trauma and feel that they still have unresolved issues. Meanwhile, the research by Junaidin et al. (2023) shows that fatherless women have anxiety about relationships with partners, where they have a negative perception of the opposite sex.

Mardiyah's research (2020) also shows that interpersonal communication with the opposite sex in fatherless women tends to be limited, especially when interacting with regular male friends, where they communicate only as necessary. However, when involved in a romantic relationship and feeling that they have found a caring figure, they exhibit a strong emotional closeness and tend to be possessive. The main barriers in communication with the opposite sex stem from fears of being belittled, disappointed, or abandoned, as experienced by their mothers.

Nainggolan et al. (2024) argue that girls without a father figure often see toxic behaviors in relationships as normal, mistaking them for romantic gestures. Past attachment wounds can also lead to trauma and fear of romantic relationships. Some seek affection from the opposite sex in an effort to fill the void left by their

father, resulting in dependency. Puspita and Setiadarma (2024) in their research also emphasize that the attachment style of fatherless women significantly contributes to the cognitive dissonance they experience. This is supported by Jackson's (2010) statement that fatherless women who have a negative relationship with their father are less expressive in their romantic relationships, tend to silence themselves, hide their feelings more, and prioritize their romantic partners.

Based on previous studies, it can be concluded that the phenomenon of fatherlessness in women, which refers to the absence of a father who is physically and emotionally involved, has a significant impact on their psychological and social development, especially in shaping their self-identity. This is reflected in anxiety, fear of rejection, and difficulties in establishing healthy relationships. Although there are studies that show the impact of fatherlessness on self-esteem and anxiety, as well as how fatherlessness can influence women's communication with the opposite sex, there is still a lack of understanding about how these experiences shape women's self-construction regarding fatherlessness in the context of romantic relationships. Therefore, the research titled 'WOMEN, FATHERLESS, AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS (A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY ON COMMUNICATION AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF FATHERLESS WOMEN IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS)' is important to be conducted..

1.2 Research Question

Based on the existing background, the problem statement proposed in this research is “How do communication styles and the construction of identity for fatherless women manifest in romantic relationships?”

1.3 Objective of The Study

Based on the background and formulation of the problems presented, the purpose of this study is to understand the communication styles and identity construction of fatherless women in romantic relationships.

1.4 Significance of The Study

1.4.1 Theoretical Significance

This research is expected to enrich the literature on the impact of being fatherless in interpersonal relationships, specifically regarding communication styles and the identity construction of fatherless women in romantic relationships.

1.4.2 Practical Significance

This research is expected to provide valuable insights for professionals in supporting women who grow up in fatherless situations and providing support to fatherless women to rise from past adversities.