

Analysis of Interpersonal Communication Dynamics Among Adolescent Girls Experiencing Fatherlessness: A Phenomenological Study

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Article history

Submitted: 2026/06/01; Revised: 2026/07/02; Accepted: 2026/08/18

Abstract

Fatherlessness is a significant issue in communication studies because the physical and emotional absence of a father figure may influence adolescent girls' ability to build relationships, develop trust, and express emotions. This study analyzes the interpersonal communication dynamics of adolescent girls experiencing fatherlessness and explores the meanings they attach to their experiences. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the study involved five primary informants, one supporting informant, and one expert informant selected purposively. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation. The findings reveal four major themes: selective self-disclosure, insecurity and fear of abandonment, the need for affection and emotional security, and the importance of supportive family and social environments. Fatherlessness does not eliminate communication abilities but shapes openness, trust, support-seeking, and relationship-building in contextual ways within their daily interpersonal communication experiences.

Keywords

Fatherless, Interpersonal Communication, Adolescent Girls, Phenomenology, Family Communication



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INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal communication constitutes a fundamental element in adolescent development, as through interaction with others, individuals learn to recognize themselves, manage emotions, convey needs, and establish social relationships. During the transition from adolescence to early adulthood, interpersonal relationships expand significantly. Relationships with family, peers, and romantic partners become spaces where individuals test trust, form identity, and obtain support. DeVito (2021) explains that openness, empathy, support, positive attitudes, and equality represent essential elements of effective interpersonal communication. The family serves as the primary communication environment that provides experiences of closeness, acceptance, care, and security. Within the family context, communication functions not merely as a medium for information transmission but also as a tool for emotional validation and the construction of meaning regarding relationships. The quality of communication between parents and children substantially

influences how children interpret themselves and how they subsequently build relationships outside the family unit.

The phenomenon of fatherlessness, understood in this study as a condition wherein the father figure is not optimally present in a child's life whether physically, emotionally, or relationally has emerged as a pertinent issue in communication studies. Such absence may stem from divorce, death, separation, conflict, or lack of paternal involvement. Consequently, fatherlessness is conceptualized not solely based on the father's physical presence within family structure, but also on the quality of role fulfillment and communication received by the child. Previous research has demonstrated that the experience of fatherlessness in women carries subjective meaning and may correlate with communication barriers, particularly regarding trust and openness (Pratiwi, Yusriana, & Poernomo, 2024). Siahaan and Subroto (2025) examined the relationship between fatherlessness and interpersonal communication among early adult women in romantic relationships. Puspita and Setiadarma (2024) further revealed that fatherlessness experiences can influence interpersonal communication dynamics with the opposite sex. Afriliani et al. (2025) emphasized the role of family communication in fostering resilience among fatherless adolescents, while Suarna et al. (2025) connected fatherlessness with self-concept formation through interpersonal communication.

However, existing research has predominantly concentrated on psychological impacts, romantic relationships, or employed quantitative approaches. Studies positioning daily interpersonal communication as the analytical center remain limited. This research addresses this gap by exploring how adolescent girls interpret their fatherlessness experiences through communication with family, friends, and the broader social environment. The phenomenological approach was deliberately selected because this study does not merely aim to identify impacts but seeks to comprehend experiences as perceived and interpreted by informants themselves. Through this approach, experiences of harboring problems, difficulty trusting others, needs for affection, and searches for support are understood as integral components of life experiences that shape communication strategies.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the dynamics of interpersonal communication in everyday life, examining openness, trust, affection, security, and family support as interconnected and interdependent processes. This study contributes to interpersonal and family communication studies by positioning fatherlessness as a dynamic and contextual communicative experience, rather than merely a psychological condition. By employing a phenomenological lens, the research seeks to uncover how adolescent girls navigate relationship boundaries, selectively disclose personal matters, choose trustworthy individuals, seek emotional support, and construct relationships that provide a sense of security all within the framework of their lived experiences of father absence.

This study aims to analyze the interpersonal communication dynamics of adolescent girls who experience fatherlessness and to understand the meaning of their experiences in building interpersonal relationships. Specifically, the research seeks to: (1) identify patterns of self-disclosure among adolescent girls experiencing fatherlessness, including how they determine boundaries of openness and selectively share personal matters with others; (2) examine trust-related challenges, including issues of insecurity and fears of abandonment that emerge in their interpersonal interactions; (3) explore their needs for affection, attention, acceptance, and security in relationships with family, peers, and romantic partners; and (4) investigate the role of family and supportive social environments in restoring and

strengthening their interpersonal communication capacities. Through these objectives, the research endeavors to provide a comprehensive understanding of how fatherlessness shapes the communicative experiences and relationship-building strategies of adolescent girls in their daily lives.

METHODS

This study employs a constructivist paradigm with a qualitative approach and phenomenological method. The constructivist paradigm is deemed appropriate as it posits that social reality is understood through the experiences and meanings constructed by subjects themselves. Phenomenology was specifically chosen to explore the lived experiences of adolescent girls experiencing fatherlessness, with particular emphasis on the communication experiences that emerge within their interpersonal relationships. This methodological framework enables researchers to delve deeply into how informants interpret and give meaning to their fatherlessness experiences, rather than merely measuring observable behaviors or outcomes.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques. The study involved five key informants who had firsthand experience of fatherlessness, one supporting informant to enrich perspectives, and one expert informant to provide professional insight. Key informants were selected based on their direct experiential knowledge and their capacity to reflect upon and articulate their communication experiences. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews designed to explore informants' experiences regarding fatherlessness, family communication patterns, self-disclosure practices, trust dynamics, peer relationships, needs for attention and affection, and coping strategies. Secondary data were obtained from books, scientific articles, and relevant research documents. To maintain confidentiality, informant identities were presented using coded pseudonyms. Observations were conducted to attend to nonverbal responses and communication contexts, while documentation served as supplementary supporting data.

Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model through three sequential stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting relevant statements from interview transcripts. Data presentation was conducted through coding, categorization, and thematic grouping, which resulted in four main thematic categories. Conclusions were drawn by identifying patterns and relationships across themes. Data credibility was strengthened through source triangulation, which compared the experiences of key informants with those of supporting and expert informants, as well as technique triangulation, which compared interview findings with observations and documentation. This rigorous analytical and validation process ensured the credibility, consistency, and trustworthiness of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the interpersonal communication dynamics of adolescent girls experiencing fatherlessness. Through in-depth interviews with five key informants, one supporting informant, and one expert informant, four main themes emerged from the data analysis. These themes form an interconnected narrative that illustrates how adolescent girls navigate communication challenges, build relationships, and seek emotional security in the absence of a father figure. The findings are presented below, followed by an integrative discussion that synthesizes the

themes within the framework of interpersonal communication theory.

Tendency to Hide Problems and Selective Self-Disclosure

The findings reveal that the tendency to harbor problems constitutes one of the most prominent communication patterns among informants. Rather than making storytelling the immediate response when facing difficulties, informants typically process problems internally and only disclose them when the issue is deemed sufficiently serious or when engaging with individuals who have already earned their trust. Informant 1 (Allya) articulated this pattern clearly:

"I'm the one who prefers to get drunk. Usually I'm more drunk. Unless, for example, the problem is really serious." (I1, Allya)

This statement demonstrates that openness for I1 is selective in nature. While she still possesses a need to communicate, not all problems are immediately shared with others. The boundaries of openness are shaped by both the perceived urgency of the problem and the sense of security felt toward the communication partner. Elaborating further, I1 explained:

"It's not easy for me to tell people about my problems. It's not easy. It's just like I'm more of a storyteller to the people closest to me." (I1, Allya)

This reinforces that relational proximity serves as the foundation for the self-disclosure process. Informants do not reject social relationships altogether; rather, they carefully select relationships that feel safe and trustworthy. Informant 3 (Cantik) provided additional insight into the barriers to openness:

"They are closed and it is not easy to tell stories because they are not heard." (I3, Cantik)

This statement indicates that obstacles to openness are also connected to prior communication experiences with the environment. When individuals feel unheard or dismissed, openness becomes less appealing because it fails to result in experiences of acceptance and validation. The expert perspective further reinforces this tendency toward internal processing. Dr. Akil (I5) observed:

"He is more inclined to his own thinking. Be introverted. So he prefers on his own thoughts so that he is not open with others." (I5, Dr. Akil)

However, it is important to note that the research findings suggest these closed tendencies are not absolute or fixed. Informants remain capable of communicating openly when they encounter relationships that are perceived as safe and supportive.

Theoretical Analysis

The findings support self-disclosure theory by showing that openness is shaped by trust and relationship history rather than occurring as a one-time act. For fatherless adolescent girls, openness becomes selective and depends on perceived safety. Attachment Theory explains this caution through internal working models formed by inconsistent early relational experiences, while Symbolic Interactionism shows how acceptance or dismissal during interactions shapes meanings of safety and risk. Consistent with Pratiwi et al. (2024) and Kalimau and Rina (2023), fatherlessness does not eliminate communicative capacity. Instead, it encourages adaptive disclosure strategies, with informants processing problems internally before selectively sharing them with trusted individuals.

Insecurity, Trust Issues, and Fear of Abandonment

The second theme reveals that the experience of fatherlessness manifests in how informants build trust and assess the sustainability of relationships. The fear of abandonment emerges prominently in friendship relationships and other interpersonal

connections. While informants can still engage socially and blend in with others, deeper relational closeness requires a more extended and deliberate process. Informant 1 (Allya) expressed this fear directly:

"I felt like I was scared to be left behind. I'm afraid that when I'm in a relationship, I'm afraid of being left behind." (I1, Allya)

This statement demonstrates that the experience of being left behind serves as a reference point when informants interpret new relationships. Importantly, fear does not always result in avoidance behavior. Instead, informants continue to build relationships but remain more sensitive to potential losses and more vigilant in monitoring relational stability. Informant 2 (Marhsya) provided additional perspective on trust difficulties:

"There are some things that make it difficult for me to trust others because not once or twice my life is used by others." (I2, Marhsya)

This indicates that trust issues are not formed exclusively by fatherlessness experiences alone. Other interpersonal experiences particularly those involving exploitation or betrayal also contribute to shaping alertness and caution. This demonstrates that communication dynamics are contextual and cannot be explained by a single causative factor. Informant 3 (Cantik) described a pattern consistent with the experiences of other participants:

"They can still mingle, they can still make friends as usual. It's just that usually children who are fatherless are more sensitive and feel afraid of being abandoned." (I3, Cantik)

The findings demonstrate that adolescent girls experiencing fatherlessness retain the ability to build social relationships but often show greater sensitivity to loss, rejection, and abandonment. Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1988) explains this pattern through internal working models shaped by early attachment experiences. The absence or unavailability of a father figure may influence expectations about the reliability and sustainability of relationships. However, informants do not avoid relationships entirely; instead, they carefully evaluate potential relationships and gradually determine whom to trust.

From the perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, trust develops through meanings attached to interpersonal experiences. Consistency, attention, confidentiality, and empathy become indicators of relational safety, whereas exploitation, rejection, or abandonment reinforce caution. These findings support Siahaan and Subroto (2025) and Pratiwi et al. (2024), while extending previous research by showing that trust issues affect not only romantic relationships but also friendships and family relationships. Trust issues should therefore be understood as outcomes of communication and relational experiences rather than fixed personality traits. Consistent and supportive communication can gradually strengthen relational security. The second theme indicates that insecurity and fear of abandonment encourage cautious trust-building without preventing relationship formation, highlighting the importance of predictable, empathetic, and supportive communication.

Search for Affection, Attention, and Sense of Security

The third theme reveals a pronounced need for affection, attention, acceptance, and a sense of security among informants. Importantly, these needs do not typically manifest as excessive attention-seeking behavior. Instead, informants actively seek relationships that can listen, understand, and respond consistently to their emotional needs. Informant 2 (Marhsya) articulated this need explicitly:

"After experiencing this fatherlessness, I really need attention. I need attention from my friends, from the people around me." (I2, Marhsya)

This statement indicates that the loss or reduction of the father's role heightens the informant's awareness of the need for attention. This attention is subsequently sought through the social environment, particularly from friends and supportive others. Informant 3 (Cantik) described the specific form of support that informants find most valuable:

"They are just enough to be heard, actually. Without being given a solution. And it's more about embracing them so that they can be open about their feelings." (I3, Cantik)

This observation is particularly significant as it demonstrates that the support informants seek is not always solution-oriented. Listening itself functions as a communicative act that conveys acceptance and validation. Being heard without pressure to solve problems becomes a meaningful form of support that facilitates emotional openness. Informant 4 (Cinta) emphasized the importance of family support:

"Support from the family is very important, especially if you have an older brother." (I4, Cinta)

This statement highlights the function of siblings as alternative sources of support. When the father figure does not fulfill his role optimally, older siblings can serve as accessible, relatable figures who provide both emotional support and a sense of security. These findings align with the concepts of supportiveness and empathy in interpersonal communication theory (DeVito, 2021). Attention becomes communicative when individuals demonstrate that the experiences of others are considered important and worthy of acknowledgment. Therefore, the quality of attention is more relevant to building trust and openness than merely the frequency of interaction. Active, empathetic listening communicates that the individual matters and that their experiences are valued.

Attachment Theory explains that the need for security can be directed at alternative attachment figures. Mothers, siblings, close friends, and the broader social environment can fulfill support functions traditionally associated with the father figure. These findings expand the understanding that fatherlessness does not simply result in loss; individuals also demonstrate adaptive capacity by building networks of relationships that provide security and emotional sustenance. These findings support Budiani et al. (2025) regarding the importance of empathy in fatherless families and Afriliani et al. (2025) concerning the role of family communication in resilience. The results are also consistent with Suarna et al. (2025), who connect interpersonal communication with self-understanding formation in fatherless individuals. This study extends previous research by demonstrating that the search for affection functions as an interpersonal communication strategy an active process of selecting relationships that provide security while avoiding those perceived as risky.

The Meaning of Affection in Communication

The affection that informants seek is not merely the presence of other people; rather, affection holds meaning when accompanied by acceptance, consistency, and emotional availability. This explains why informants tend to choose specific individuals as their support systems. Those who can listen without judgment or pressure are perceived as safer and more worthy of trust. Consequently, the search for affection represents an interpersonal communication strategy wherein informants actively determine which relationships provide security and which should be avoided based on perceived risk. The third theme reveals that adolescent girls experiencing fatherlessness demonstrate strong needs for affection, attention, acceptance, and security. These needs are addressed through strategic relationship selection and the cultivation of supportive connections with friends, siblings, and family members. The findings highlight the adaptive capacity of informants, who actively build

relational networks that fulfill emotional needs in the absence of a father figure.

The Role of Family and Social Support in Recovering and Strengthening Interpersonal Communication

The fourth theme demonstrates that the family remains an important resource in the restoration and strengthening of interpersonal communication. The absence of the father does not necessarily mean that informants lose all family support. Mothers, siblings, sisters, and extended family members can assume significant support functions, providing alternative spaces for communication and emotional connection. Dr. Akil (I5), the expert informant, offered professional insight:

"Yes, you can. That is precisely what is expected. So even though the child had communication problems, he was quieter. Then if other family members can help, that's exactly what is expected." (I5, Dr. Akil)

This statement confirms that support from other family members can compensate when communication with the father is hindered or unavailable. Such support serves as an alternative space for adolescents to express themselves and process their experiences. Informant 4 (Cinta) reiterated the importance of family:

"Support from the family is very important, especially if you have an older brother." (I4, Cinta)

Older siblings, in particular, can serve as figures who are close to daily life and easier to talk to, given their shared experiences and generational proximity. Sibling support can help informants gain more secure relational experiences and develop healthier communication patterns. Cinta further emphasized the protective function of the family:

"For families, yes, the advice is that it should be, the name of the girl must be able to continue to be monitored... It's very important to have family support." (I4, Cinta)

This statement affirms that families play a protective role through monitoring and attention to children's conditions and social environments. The monitoring mentioned here refers not merely to control but to thoughtful attention to the child's emotional well-being and social context. Family communication theory (Koerner & Fitzpatrick) explains that the family serves as the initial space for the formation of meaning regarding trust, acceptance, and support. When family communication patterns are open and supportive, children have space to share experiences and receive validation. Conversely, when communication does not provide space for dialogue, children may develop more closed communication strategies that limit openness in other relationships.

Within the framework of Attachment Theory, mothers, siblings, and friends can function as alternative attachment figures. Consistent and emotionally available relationships can provide a secure base for informants to build relationships outside the family. These findings demonstrate that the adaptation process occurs through available relationships, not solely through the father figure. This expands understanding of attachment by showing that security can be developed through multiple relational pathways. Observations conducted during the research revealed notable changes in nonverbal responses when informants discussed support from friends or family. On topics related to attention and support, informants appeared more relaxed, communicative, and open than when discussing their experiences of losing a father figure. These observational findings reinforce that security is not only expressed through words but also visible in how informants physically and emotionally respond to conversations. Positive relational experiences manifest in more open body language, greater willingness to engage, and

reduced tension during communication.

These findings align with Afriliani et al. (2025), Budiani et al. (2025), and Puspitasari et al. (2025) regarding the function of family and extended family members in supporting individuals through changing family circumstances. This research expands upon previous work by positioning family support as part of the dynamics of interpersonal communication rather than merely as a psychological resource. The findings demonstrate that family support operates through communicative processes listening, responding, validating, and maintaining consistent presence.

The fourth theme reveals that family and supportive social environments play crucial roles in recovering and strengthening interpersonal communication for adolescent girls experiencing fatherlessness. While the father's absence presents challenges, other family members particularly mothers and siblings can provide alternative spaces for emotional expression, trust-building, and relational learning. The quality of communication within the remaining family structure significantly influences how informants develop interpersonal skills and relational strategies.

Integrative Discussion

The four themes form a coherent and interconnected narrative of interpersonal communication dynamics among adolescent girls experiencing fatherlessness. Together, these themes illustrate a developmental trajectory that moves from self-protection toward the search for security and relational adaptation. The experience of fatherlessness serves as the initial context that shapes how informants interpret closeness and trust. From this context arises a tendency to harbor problems and limit openness as a protective mechanism. These barriers are then connected to trust issues and fears of abandonment in interpersonal relationships. In the subsequent stage, informants actively seek relationships that provide affection, attention, and a sense of security. Finally, family and social support systems play crucial roles in restoring and strengthening communication capacities.

Synthesis of Themes

The table below summarizes the four themes, their associated communication patterns, and their primary meanings:

Theme	Communication Patterns	Primary Meanings
Identifying Problems & Selective Self-Disclosure	Limited openness; selective disclosure based on relationship safety	Personal protection and strategic relationship selection
Insecurity & Trust Issues	Vigilant and evaluative approaches to relationships; gradual trust-building	Relationships must be proven safe before trust can develop
Search for Affection & Attention	Proactive support-seeking; cultivation of secure relationships	Need for acceptance, validation, and sense of security
Family & Support System	Empathetic, consistent, and non-judgmental communication	Recovery and strengthening of interpersonal relationships

These findings suggest that fatherlessness cannot be understood simply as a condition that produces uniformly negative impacts. Rather, informants demonstrate significant adaptive capacity. They learn to set boundaries, evaluate relationships strategically, choose support systems wisely, and build independence through communicative competence. In DeVito's (2021) framework of interpersonal communication, effective communication requires openness, empathy, support, positive attitudes, and equality. The findings of this study demonstrate the relationships between these elements in the context of fatherlessness. Informants are more open when they feel listened to and validated. They are easier to trust when others demonstrate consistency and reliability. They are more comfortable building closeness when the relationship provides a genuine sense of security. This suggests that the principles of effective interpersonal communication are particularly salient in helping individuals navigate the challenges associated with fatherlessness.

Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1988) provides a useful framework for understanding the process of seeking security in relationships. The findings demonstrate that the need for a secure base is not eliminated by fatherlessness but is redirected to alternative attachment figures. This extends understanding of attachment dynamics by showing that security can be achieved through multiple relational pathways beyond the father-child relationship. Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969) explains how security and trust are given meaning through communication experiences. Through ongoing social interaction, informants develop shared meanings about what constitutes safe and trustworthy relationships. These meanings are constructed and reconstructed through communicative exchanges, highlighting the dynamic nature of relational interpretation. Family communication theory (Koerner & Fitzpatrick) explains how the family serves as the initial source of relational learning as well as a space for recovery. When family communication patterns are supportive, they provide a foundation for healthy relationship development. When family communication is constrained, alternative support systems become particularly important.

The Role of Multiple Factors

The findings also suggest that the experience of fatherlessness is not the only factor shaping communication dynamics. Informant 2 (Marhsya), for example, cited experiences of being exploited by others as significant reasons for her difficulty trusting people. This demonstrates the importance of examining fatherlessness experiences alongside other interpersonal experiences that shape communication patterns. The study did not find a single cause-and-effect relationship but rather identified patterns of interlocking experiences that collectively influence communication strategies. This highlights the complexity of interpersonal communication and the need for nuanced, context-sensitive understanding.

Adaptive Capacity and Resilience

A particularly significant finding across all themes is the adaptive capacity demonstrated by informants. Rather than being defined solely by loss or deficit, the informants developed sophisticated communication strategies for managing vulnerability, building trust, and seeking support. These strategies reflect resilience and agency, not merely vulnerability. The selective self-disclosure, cautious trust-building, strategic relationship selection, and active support-seeking observed in the study all represent adaptive responses to challenging relational circumstances.

Research Contributions

The primary contribution of this research lies in the understanding of fatherlessness

as a communication phenomenon. This study demonstrates that fatherlessness can be meaningfully analyzed through patterns of openness, trust, affection, and support all fundamental concepts in interpersonal communication theory. By examining fatherlessness through a communicative lens, the study reveals how adolescent girls navigate relationship boundaries, construct meanings of safety and trust, and build support networks in the absence of a father figure. The study also expands the study of interpersonal communication by demonstrating that self-disclosure in fatherless adolescent girls is selective and develops based on experiences of security. This challenges binary conceptualizations of openness as either present or absent and instead reveals openness as a nuanced, context-dependent process. Additionally, the research strengthens the idea that support systems function as part of the communication process. Mothers, siblings, sisters, and friends are not only emotionally helpful but also serve as spaces where individuals can relearn and rebuild trust and closeness. This positions support systems not merely as resources but as active participants in communication development.

Research Implications

Theoretical Implications

The findings make several important theoretical contributions. First, the research strengthens interpersonal communication theory by demonstrating that self-openness is influenced by perceptions of relationship security. Openness cannot be understood solely as a personal character trait; it develops through experiences of interaction and the quality of responses from communication partners. This suggests that interpersonal communication theories should attend more carefully to contextual factors that shape disclosure patterns. Second, the research expands the application of Attachment Theory in the context of communication. The findings indicate that a sense of security is not only related to emotional states but is also formed through consistent verbal and nonverbal messages.

The support received through communication can function as new relational experience that helps informants rebuild trust. This integration of attachment and communication perspectives offers a more comprehensive understanding of relational development. Third, in the theory of family communication, the research demonstrates that changes in family structure do not always result in uniform communication patterns. The quality of relationships with remaining family members particularly mothers and siblings is an important mediating factor. The family can serve as a space for recovery when it provides dialogue, empathy, and acceptance. This challenges deterministic views of family structure and instead emphasizes the importance of communication quality.

Practical Implications

The findings carry significant practical implications for families, educators, mental health professionals, and social support systems. For Families: Families should prioritize building consistent, open, and non-judgmental communication with adolescents experiencing fatherlessness. Adolescents need space to define the limits of their own openness. Family members should not force children to share their stories but can demonstrate availability to listen when the child is ready. Creating regular opportunities for connection such as family meals, shared activities, and one-on-one conversations can help establish the relational safety needed for meaningful communication.

For Schools and Educational Environments: Schools can provide safe spaces for communication and emotional expression. Teachers and counselors should avoid labeling adolescents who tend to be introverted or reserved. A more appropriate approach is to build

consistent relationships, practice active listening, and give adolescents options for sharing experiences. School-based support groups for adolescents experiencing family changes could provide valuable opportunities for connection and validation.

For the Social Environment: Support can be provided through stable presence, confidentiality, and empathic responses. The findings demonstrate that informants do not always need solutions; being listened to and accepted often constitutes a more meaningful form of support. Friends and extended family members can offer this support by maintaining consistent availability, respecting privacy boundaries, and responding with empathy rather than judgment. For Mental Health Professionals: Practitioners working with adolescent girls experiencing fatherlessness should attend to communication patterns as indicators of relational security and emotional well-being. Therapeutic interventions might focus on rebuilding trust through consistent, predictable therapeutic relationships. Supporting individuals in developing selective self-disclosure strategies and evaluating relationship safety can promote adaptive communication and relational health.

The research has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study is limited by the number of informants and the diverse contexts of their experiences. The findings are not intended to be statistically generalized to all adolescent girls experiencing fatherlessness. The phenomenological approach emphasizes subjective experiences, meaning that interpretation depends on informants' ability to articulate their experiences. Second, the study has not compared fatherlessness experiences based on gender, sociocultural background, or specific types of father absence (such as death versus divorce versus separation). Such comparisons could reveal important variations in communication patterns and needs.

Third, the study has not employed a longitudinal design to examine long-term communication changes. Understanding how communication patterns evolve over time would provide valuable insights into the developmental trajectory of interpersonal communication in the context of fatherlessness. Fourth, the study relies primarily on self-report data through interviews. While observations were conducted, future research might incorporate more diverse data collection methods, including interaction analysis, communication diaries, or narrative analysis of personal writings. These limitations represent boundaries of interpretation as well as opportunities for further research.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the interpersonal communication dynamics of adolescent girls experiencing fatherlessness unfold dynamically and contextually, rather than following a fixed or deterministic pattern. The absence of a father figure serves as a significant relational experience that influences how informants interpret openness, trust, closeness, affection, and security in their relationships. However, fatherlessness does not automatically predetermine poor interpersonal communication outcomes. Instead, informants demonstrate adaptive capacities by building alternative relationships, selectively managing boundaries of openness, and developing independence. The findings reveal four interconnected patterns: (1) a tendency to harbor problems and practice selective self-disclosure based on relational closeness, trust, and perceived safety; (2) experiences of insecurity, trust issues, and fear of abandonment that manifest in cautious approaches to relationship formation, though informants retain the ability to build social connections; (3) pronounced needs for affection, attention, acceptance, and security, which are fulfilled through relationships with mothers, siblings, friends, and the broader social environment, with empathetic listening proving

more meaningful than solution-oriented support; and (4) the crucial role of supportive family and social environments in strengthening interpersonal communication through open, consistent, and non-judgmental interactions.

The research contributes to interpersonal and family communication studies by positioning fatherlessness as a communicative phenomenon that shapes, but does not solely determine, communication behaviors. The findings demonstrate that the experience of fatherlessness is more accurately understood as an influential contextual factor in the communication process rather than as a definitive cause of communicative deficits. Importantly, supportive relational experiences characterized by empathy, consistency, and acceptance can help informants develop openness and rebuild trust over time. This understanding carries significant implications for families, educational institutions, and support systems, emphasizing the importance of creating safe communicative spaces where adolescent girls can disclose gradually, experience validation, and develop healthier relational patterns. Rather than viewing fatherlessness as a limitation, this study encourages recognition of the adaptive strategies and resilience that adolescent girls develop in navigating their interpersonal relationships.

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