

## Communication Resilience of Girls in Fatherless Families

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**ABSTRACT:** The phenomenon of fatherless families is increasing and has a significant impact on the psychological development and communication patterns of girls, especially in adolescence and early adulthood. The absence of a father figure often raises problems with interpersonal communication, emotional instability, and challenges in building self-resilience in the family and social environment. This study aims to analyze how communication resilience is built by girls growing up in fatherless families and the factors that influence it. This study uses the foundations of resilience theory, family communication theory, and meaning construction theory to understand the adaptation process, emotion management, and communication strategies developed by the research subjects. The research method used is qualitative with a phenomenological approach, through in-depth interviews and observations of Generation Z girls who come from fatherless families in the city of Surabaya. The results of the study show that communication resilience is formed through the process of accepting family conditions, strengthening the role of mothers or surrogate figures, utilizing digital communication spaces, and the ability of individuals to interpret life experiences reflectively. The discussion revealed that although the condition of fatherlessness has the potential to cause emotional wounds, the subject is able to build adaptive and meaningful communication patterns as a form of coping mechanism. The conclusion of this study confirms that the communication resilience of girls in fatherless families is not instantaneous, but rather is a dynamic process influenced by the family environment, social support, and reflective capacity of individuals, so it is important to get attention in the study of family communication and social policy.

**KEYWORDS:** resilience; communication; daughters; fatherless; family

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The family is seen as the smallest social unit in a society consisting of father, mother, and child, where each member has a role and function to be performed. Imbalances in the implementation of these roles and responsibilities can trigger tension and conflicts between family members. If one of the family members is negligent or does not understand his duties, the dynamics of family life have the potential to be disrupted, even causing rifts in the relationship that reduce harmony. A family can be called harmonious if all its members understand each other, carry out their functions, and respect each other's responsibilities. Children as a mandate from God are the main focus that must be cared for, educated, and nurtured by the family until adulthood. Because the family is the first and longest institution present in a child's life, its role is crucial in shaping the development and formation of a child's character. Therefore, strengthening family functions and awareness of the role of each member is a priority in building a healthy and harmonious family.

In family life, communication has a very important role to achieve common goals, so it is often prioritized and planned. Without active communication, the relationship between parents and children has the potential to be strained and even damaged. Effective communication is characterized by understanding and mutual support from all family members. Open and positive communication needs to be encouraged to strengthen family ties. In other words, communication is an essential element in family dynamics (Sobandi & Dewi, 2017). A communication can be said to be effective if the message conveyed can be understood and received according to the sender's intentions, and is followed up voluntarily by the recipient. This allows for the creation of quality interpersonal relationships without barriers, which is essential for the emotional growth of children.

In the context of family communication dynamics, the family communication patterns theory proposed by Koerner & Fitzpatrick (2002) provides a more specific understanding of how family interactions shape the way of thinking, behaving, and interpreting reality between family members. This theory highlights two main dimensions in family communication, namely conversation orientation and conformity orientation. Conversation orientation refers to the extent to which the family encourages openness, sharing of opinions, and two-way discussions, while conformity orientation emphasizes the importance of uniformity of values, obedience to authority, and harmony in the family. The balance between these two dimensions determines the pattern of

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communication that develops—whether the family is open and collaborative, or tends to be closed and hierarchical (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Theiss, 2018). This dimension is important in understanding the dynamics of children growing up in fatherless families, because the absence of the father can shift the existing communication pattern.

The absence of a father figure in a family has a significant impact on communication and child development. A fatherless family is a family that experiences the absence of a father figure, either physically or emotionally, due to death, divorce, remote work, or psychological/emotional absence (Amanto, 2005; Horn & Sylvester, 2002). The role of a father is not only to earn a living, but also as a playmate, caregiver, teacher, role model, supervisor, protector, and supporter (Hart, 2002). However, in reality, not all fathers understand their full role, so many are not optimal in contributing to children's development (BkkbN, 2017). This condition has an impact on children's development that is less intact, especially in emotional, social, and interpersonal communication aspects.

The phenomenon of fatherlessness in Indonesia is increasingly relevant in line with urban social and economic dynamics, especially for girls of generation Z. 2020 Population Census data recorded that generation Z was 27.94% of the total population, while BKKBN and UNICEF data in 2021 showed that 20.9% of children experienced fatherlessness. The causative factors include divorce, death, father's job, and high mobility that limits time with family (Prameswari, 2025a; Aranditio, 2025). In addition, the influence of digital and modern culture has also exacerbated the situation, where social media and gadgets often replace direct interaction. As a result, Gen Z children feel that the father's presence is more physical than emotional, which can affect their sense of security and ability to build healthy social relationships (Astagini et al., 2024).

The father's mental health factor is also an important cause of emotional fatherlessness. Disorders such as major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or PTSD can reduce the father's ability to provide psychological support and healthy interactions (Putry et al., 2025; Ministry of Health, 2023). The stigma of mental disorders in Indonesian society further worsens the situation, so that children face emotional disconnection as well as social pressure (Aini & Hidayati, 2025). Research shows that girls who experience emotional fatherlessness tend to have anxious or avoidant attachments, have difficulty expressing themselves, and are more susceptible to trust issues in interpersonal relationships (Diananda, 2020).

The influence of fathers' parenting styles on girls is also significant. Baumrind (in Nursalim, 2007) distinguishes three parenting styles: authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative. The lack of paternal roles is often associated with permissive or neglectful patterns, which have an impact on weak self-discipline, self-confidence, and the ability to build healthy relationships (Hardianita et al., 2024). Girls who grow up without full father involvement tend to experience unhealthy patterns of emotional dependence (Freeks, 2022). Therefore, quality communication in the family is very important to create feelings of security, support children's emotional development, and build positive meaning to life experiences, including the loss of a father figure (Thoyiah, 2021; Harahap, 2020).

The study of Tahir et al., (2024) shows that fatherless children through interactions such as dialogue with their mothers, interpretation of social comments, and reflection on the absence of fathers form a self-concept that may be positive or negative depending on the context of loss and the parenting received. These findings support the idea that reputation, labels, and symbols of the father's role or lack thereof are constantly negotiated interactions in children's lives, and are important in determining how they develop communication resilience. This negotiation process shapes how children respond to social pressures, regulate emotions, and adapt behaviors to the context of the family and the broader social environment. In other words, fatherless children learn to internalize the loss of the father figure and structure their experiences through social interaction and internal reflection.

In the city of Surabaya, generation Z is one of the largest and most dynamic demographic groups. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of the City of Surabaya in 2024, the age group of children (0–14 years) reached 21.47% of the total population, while the productive age group (15–59 years) dominated up to 66.16%. Specifically, the 15–24 year old age group that represents Generation Z makes up about 15.95% of the total population, with details of 7.98% aged 15–19 years and 7.97% aged 20–24 years (Databoks, 2025). This figure shows that issues of parenting, mental health, and the role of fathers have wide relevance to the social conditions of the younger generation in metropolitan cities such as Surabaya (Darmawan, 2024). The high proportion of Generation Z shows the urgency of research on the influence of the absence of a father figure on their social and emotional development.

Surabaya as a big city with a high rhythm of urban life faces complex social challenges. One of them is the increasing psychological pressure among Generation Z due to lifestyle changes, academic demands, and intense social media exposure. This phenomenon is reflected in public activities such as the "Brainpression" program at the University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya in 2024, which involves thousands of new students to express their mental state through artwork (Sahal, 2024). These activities show that there is a strong need for Generation Z to channel emotions and stress that may be rooted in a lack of emotional support in the family environment, including from the father figure. In addition, awareness campaigns such as the seminar "Gen Z: Ambition vs Mental Health" by ITS and Pertamina in 2024 emphasize that emotional balance is a major concern for the younger generation (Irawan, 2024).

Surabaya's socio-economic conditions also affect the emergence of the fatherless phenomenon among generation Z. Data from the Surabaya Ministry of Religion through Kompas (2024) shows that the number of marriages has consistently decreased from 18,451 marriages in 2019 to 15,870 in 2023. This decline is related to the tendency of the younger generation to postpone marriage

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due to career, economic, and relationship instability. As a result, the number of children growing up in single families or families with incomplete structures increases, where one parent, especially the father, is neither physically nor emotionally present (Setiawan & Kurniati, 2024). This phenomenon confirms that fatherlessness is not only the result of divorce or death, but also the result of changes in the social structure of urban society that demand high mobility and individuality.

The digital phenomenon has become a new space of expression for Generation Z girls related to the fatherless experience. Radar Surabaya 2025 coverage noted that Gen Z often shares complaints about the absence or lack of support from fathers to get social validation. Hashtags such as #fatherlessgeneration and #woundswithoutscars are widely used on TikTok and X to tell personal experiences and childhood trauma due to the absence of a father figure (Syah, 2025). The viral content shows a deep emotional impact, where girls sometimes can't say "daddy" without shedding tears. Prastiti's study (2025) also found that digital narratives such as "Marriage is Scary" show Gen Z's concern about the emotional readiness and support of father figures before marriage, marking the importance of understanding communication resilience in the digital realm.

The social campaign movement in Surabaya increasingly emphasizes the role of fathers through social media. On May 7, 2025, the Minister of Population and Family Development (Mendukbangga) together with BKKBN invited Genre Ambassadors to promote the Indonesian Exemplary Fathers Movement (GATI), emphasizing the importance of physical and emotional father's presence (Prameswari, 2025b). This phenomenon triggers Generation Z girls to develop communication resilience, which is the ability to rise, adapt, and develop positively in facing communication challenges, by maintaining mental and emotional health. Communication resilience includes managing emotions, utilizing internal and external resources, and the ability to build healthy social relationships.

A number of previous studies still leave gaps. Empirically, previous research has focused on the psychological impact of school-age children or early adolescents, whereas the impact of fatherlessness continues into early adulthood, particularly in the formation of self-concept, interpersonal relationships, and social adaptation. Theoretically, many studies use the perspective of developmental psychology or attachment theory, which has not sufficiently explained the dynamics of family communication in shaping girls' emotional resilience (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). In addition, the digital dimension and urban context are still rarely studied, even though Gen Z lives in an era of intense virtual communication, using social media as a means of expressing fatherless experiences, building validation, and narratives of resilience (Buzzanell, 2010; Walsh, 2006).

This study uses a phenomenological approach to understand the experiences of Generation Z girls who grow up in fatherless families in depth. Phenomenology allows researchers to capture participants' perceptions and subjective meanings of the loss of a father figure, negotiation of family roles, and the use of digital interactions and intrafamily communication in building resilience (Alhazmi & Alhazmi, 2022; Öhlén & Friberg, 2023). With this approach, research can reveal how Gen Z girls construct the meaning of loss, regulate emotions, and build self-resilience through family communication patterns and digital communication practices. Based on this focus, this study aims to understand the process of constructing the meaning of losing a father figure, family communication patterns, and digital communication practices that shape the communication resilience of Generation Z girls in the city of Surabaya

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Communication Theory of Resilience

Communication Theory of Resilience (Buzzanell, 2010) explains that resilience is not an innate trait of an individual, but rather a process that is actively built through daily communication practices, especially when individuals or families face significant crisis, loss, or disruption. Buzzanell (2010) emphasizes that resilience is formed through the use of discursive and material resources to create a "new normal" after a traumatic event, including in the context of the loss of the father figure. This theory identifies five main communication processes, namely crafting normalcy, affirming identity anchors, maintaining and using communication networks, putting alternative logics to use, and foregrounding productive action, which collectively allow individuals to rearrange the meaning of life, maintain emotional stability, and build an adaptive future direction. In fatherless families, this theory is relevant because it explains how communication becomes a key mechanism for girls to negotiate loss, build a sense of security, and develop emotional resilience through interactions with mothers, extended families, and social and digital environments.

### Family Communication Patterns Theory

Family Communication Patterns Theory proposed by Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) explains that family communication patterns are formed through two main dimensions, namely conversation orientation and conformity orientation, which determine how families share meaning, express emotions, and manage differences. Conversation orientation refers to the extent to which the family encourages openness, discussion, and exchange of ideas, while conformity orientation emphasizes uniform values, obedience, and family harmony. The combination of these two orientations gives birth to four types of family communication patterns, namely consensual, pluralistic, protective, and laissez-faire. In the context of fatherless families, this theory becomes important because the absence of the father figure often shifts the authority structure and family interaction patterns, so that girls have to adjust to new communication patterns formed with the mother or surrogate figure (Koerner, Fitzpatrick, & Ritchie, 2017).

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Communication patterns that are oriented towards open conversations have been shown to be more supportive of emotional adaptation and the formation of children's resilience (Miller-Day & Koerner, 2020).

### Fatherless

Fatherless refers to the condition of the absence of a father figure in a child's life, both physically and psychologically, which has an impact on the child's upbringing and development process as a whole. Karmadewi, Kunti Indra, et al. (2017) explained that fathers have a strategic role in determining the direction of the family, setting values, providing economic needs, being an example, and providing supervision and protection. The absence of this role, which is also referred to as father absence, father loss, or father hunger, creates a void of exemplary figures and affection in the child's life (Amalia, 2016). Hart (2002) emphasized that fathers play the role of economic providers, friend and playmate, caregiver, teacher and role model, monitor and disciplinarian, protector, advocate, and resource. The absence of these roles has an impact on low self-esteem, loneliness, anger, anxiety, and psychological well-being disorders, especially in girls (Lerner, 2011; Kruk, 2012; Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2009; Thomas, 2009).

### Communication Resilience

Communication Resilience is the ability of individuals or groups to maintain healthy, adaptive, and constructive communication in the face of pressure or crisis. West, Turner, and Zhao (2018) define communication resilience as the capacity to bounce back, adapt, and develop positively through effective communication, so that conflict can be managed and psychological balance is maintained. Walsh (2006) emphasizes that family resilience is built through communication that maintains cohesion, openness, and emotional support, even in difficult situations. Patterson and Kelleher (2005) added that communication allows individuals and families to build coping strategies, maintain expectations, and create shared meaning in dealing with problems. In a fatherless family, communication resilience is key for girls to manage emotions, negotiate the meaning of loss, and build healthy interpersonal relationships.

### Generation Z

Generation Z is a group of individuals born between 1997–2012 and are known as digital natives because they have been exposed to the internet, smartphones, and social media from an early age (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). This generation has a high level of technological adaptation, but also faces significant psychological vulnerabilities, especially in the context of an incomplete family. Social media such as TikTok, Instagram, and X have become spaces for emotional expression, validation searches, and self-identity formation. For Generation Z girls who experience fatherlessness, the digital space is often a place to channel the wounds of parenting, but it can also reinforce insecurity, the need for excessive validation, and internal conflicts related to trust and interpersonal relationships (Aziza, 2024). Therefore, understanding Generation Z needs to consider the relationship between family experiences, digital communication, and the formation of emotional resilience (Harrison, K, 2017).

## III. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm and an interpretive phenomenological type of research. This approach was chosen because the research aims to deeply understand the meaning of lived *experiences* of Generation Z girls who grow up in fatherless families in the city of Surabaya, especially in the context of family communication and the formation of communication resilience. Qualitative research emphasizes understanding participants' subjective reality as they interpret it themselves through experience, language, and social interaction (Creswell, 2019). The interpretive paradigm views social reality as the result of the construction of meaning built through communication, so that the researcher plays the role of the main instrument that dialogically and reflectively interprets the shared experiences of participants (Schwandt, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The interpretive phenomenological approach allows researchers to explore the essence of the experience of losing a father figure, the process of identity negotiation, and the dynamics of interpersonal and digital communication that shape the resilience of Generation Z girls (Englander & Morley, 2023).

The subjects of the study were 5 Generation Z girls (aged 18–27 years) who lived in the city of Surabaya and experienced a fatherless condition for at least five years, either due to death, divorce, or emotional absence of their father, who were selected through purposive sampling (Abdussamad, 2021). The object of the research is the communication experience and the formation of communication resilience of girls in fatherless families. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory **observations**, documentation, and literature studies, with interviews as the main technique to explore the narrative of participants' life experiences (Moleong, 2021; Liamputtong, 2019). Data analysis uses phenomenological analysis following the stages of Creswell (2019), including the identification of significant statements, grouping of meaning units, textural and structural descriptions, to the discovery of the essence of experience, with the principle of *bracketing* to minimize researcher bias (Kusnoro, 2019). The validity of the data is maintained through a credibility test by triangulating sources, which is comparing data from various informants and contexts to ensure consistency and accuracy of the meaning of research findings (Sugiyono, 2015; Abdussamad, 2021).

### IV. RESULTS OF RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

#### RESEARCH RESULTS

The city of Surabaya is the capital of East Java Province as well as the largest metropolitan center in eastern Indonesia. Administratively, Surabaya is divided into 31 sub-districts and 154 sub-districts, with the highest population concentrations in Tambaksari, Sukolilo, and Wonokromo Districts. Surabaya's strategic geographical location—bordered by the Madura Strait to the north and east, Sidoarjo Regency to the south, and Gresik Regency to the west—makes it a center of trade, education, and high social mobility. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of the City of Surabaya in 2024, the population will reach 3.02 million people with a density level of around 8,600 people/km<sup>2</sup>, the highest in East Java. Over the past five years, the average population growth rate (CAGR) was recorded at 0.82%, an increase compared to the previous period which was only 0.36%. The age structure shows the dominance of the productive age group (15–59 years) at 66.16%, followed by the children group (0–14 years) at 21.47%, and the elderly (≥60 years) at 12.37% (Databoks, 2024). This composition affirms Surabaya as a city with a young population with social dynamics typical of urban society, such as high mobility, work pressure, and changes in family interaction patterns.

Ethnic and social heterogeneity includes Javanese, Madurese, Chinese, Arabs, and other minority groups—creating an open but also challenging social environment in terms of family cohesion and intergenerational communication. Economic pressures, career demands, and urban lifestyles contribute to the increase in emotional absenteeism of parents, especially fathers, resulting in the phenomenon of fatherlessness both physically and psychologically. This condition is an important social context in understanding the formation of communication resilience of Generation Z girls in Surabaya. Generation Z (born 1997–2012) is one of the largest demographic groups in Surabaya. Kamandanu data (2023) shows that the number of Generation Z in Surabaya reaches around 741,285 people or ±25% of the total population. Regionally, BPS East Java (2024) recorded a proportion of Generation Z of 24.8% of the total provincial population, with the highest concentration in urban areas such as Surabaya, Sidoarjo, and Malang (Surabayatoday.id, 2024). This means that one in four Surabaya residents is part of Generation Z.

Generation Z Surabaya is growing as digital natives with a very high internet penetration rate. Data from Kominfo Surabaya (2024) recorded that more than 90% of the population aged 15–35 years is connected to the internet. Social media such as TikTok, Instagram, and X not only serve as a means of entertainment, but also a space for emotional expression, mental health advocacy, and the search for social support. This phenomenon can be seen in the rise of online campaigns such as #FatherlessGeneration, #MentalHealthAwareness, and #HealingInnerChild which are initiated by many young people in Surabaya.

On the other hand, Generation Z also faces significant social and economic pressures. BPS data (2023) shows that around 9.9 million young Indonesians aged 15–24 years are classified as NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training), with a high concentration in urban areas. Academic pressure, expectations of success, and changes in family relationships have an impact on increased psychological vulnerability, especially in adolescent and early adult women. This condition makes Generation Z Surabaya a strategic group to examine the relationship between family dynamics, digital communication, and resilience formation.

As the economic center of East Java, Surabaya recorded economic growth of 5.72% in 2024, dominated by the trade sector, processing industry, educational services, and information (BPS Surabaya City, 2024). However, this growth has not completely eliminated social disparities. The rising cost of living, job competition, and the demands of modern lifestyles are putting economic pressure on young families and single parents.

In terms of education, the educational participation rate of 16–24 year olds in Surabaya is relatively high, reaching 89.4% (BPS, 2024). However, academic pressure and performance expectations also increase the risk of stress and mental health disorders. Data from the Surabaya Health Office (2024) shows a 17% increase in psychological consultations among students and students compared to the previous year. In the context of fatherless families, this economic and educational pressure has the potential to weaken the quality of family communication, but at the same time opens up space for girls to develop independence and adaptation strategies through reflective and supportive communication.

This study involved five Generation Z female participants aged 19–25 years who lived in Surabaya and experienced fatherless conditions both physically and emotionally. Participants were selected using purposive sampling and coded P1–P5 to maintain identity confidentiality. All participants showed active involvement in the digital space, either through social media, personal blogs, or online communities.

The results of the interviews showed a variety of fatherless experiences: the loss of a father due to death (P1), divorce and communication breakdown (P2), the father's mental disorder (P3), domestic conflict and separation (P4), and the father's physical presence but minimal emotional involvement (P5). Despite their different backgrounds, all participants showed similar patterns in the form of dominance of the role of mothers or surrogate figures in family communication, the use of digital space as a means of expression and emotional coping and expression, and efforts to reinterpret relationships with father figures through personal narratives and communication symbolization.

Phenomenological analysis of interview data yielded four main themes that represent the process of forming communication resilience of Generation Z girls in fatherless families. These themes are a synthesis between participants' empirical experiences and the theoretical framework of Communication Theory of Resilience (Buzzanell, 2010) and Family Communication

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Patterns Theory (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). These four themes illustrate how the loss of the father figure is interpreted, how family communication functions as a source of resilience, and how digital space is used as an alternative arena for identity formation and emotional support.

## DISCUSSION

### The Meaning of Losing the Father Figure in the Life Experience of Generation Z Girls

The loss of a father figure for Generation Z girls is not simply interpreted as the absence of a male figure in the family structure, but as an emotional event that shapes the way they understand themselves, interpersonal relationships, and the social world around them. This experience of loss is experienced in layers, encompassing physical, emotional, and social dimensions, each of which contributes differently to the participant's life journey. In the early stages, girls face not only the physical absence of fathers, but also the absence of emotional support and communicative roles that are generally attached to the father figure in the family.

The process of accepting such losses takes place dynamically and is not always linear. From a phenomenological perspective, each participant showed a different way of managing feelings of grief, anger, disappointment, to the stage of building a new meaning for the experience experienced. These emotions are part of the process of negotiating meaning, where children try to rearrange their relationship with themselves as well as with their social environment.

The experience of losing a father figure also affects the formation of self-concept and the quality of girls' interpersonal relationships. Most of the participants described that the absence of a father figure presents challenges in building confidence, emotional stability, and the ability to establish closeness with others, both in the context of family, friendships, and romantic relationships. In these conditions, communication with mothers, surrogate figures, and the social environment are important factors in forming resilience mechanisms that allow participants to rise and adapt.

The meaning of loss experienced by Generation Z girls does not stop at personal experiences, but also reflects the process of identity negotiation. Through daily communication, participants negotiate an identity as an individual who grew up without a father figure, balancing the need for social acceptance and the effort to maintain self-integrity. Therefore, this subchapter explains the meaning of losing the father figure through four main dimensions, namely: (1) the form of loss (physical, emotional, and social), (2) the process of acceptance and emotions that arise, (3) the impact on self-concept and interpersonal relationships, and (4) its relationship with the identity negotiation process in fatherless families.

The results of interviews with five participants showed that the loss of the father figure in fatherless families in Generation Z girls was multidimensional and not single. There are three main forms of loss identified, namely physical, emotional, and social loss. Each form of loss was interpreted differently by the participants, depending on the background of the life experience and the quality of the initial relationship with the father.

#### 1. Physical Loss

The physical loss of the father figure is experienced by P1 and P2, both through the death and divorce of the parents. In P1, the death of the father not only cuts off physical presence in daily life, but also eliminates the space for routine communication that was previously an important part of family interaction. P1 illustrates that simple moments of communication, such as a trip to school, become memories that continue to evoke a sense of loss. He stated:

"After my father died, the house felt very quiet. He used to go to school every morning, and now every time I go the same way, I always remember that time." (P1)

Meanwhile, P2 experienced physical loss in the context of divorce. Although his father is still alive, the communication that occurs has become very limited and no longer dialogical. The father-son relationship shifts to sporadic communication through text messages, without meaningful emotional involvement. P2 reveals:

"My father is still alive, but for me it feels like it doesn't exist. We rarely communicate, and I don't know what he's doing now." (P2)

This lack of communication creates barriers to maintaining emotional closeness and makes it difficult for participants to understand the position and role of fathers in their lives. The disconnection of communication not only creates relational distance, but also affects the way participants build trust and seek support from other male figures. However, the process of rising in P1 and P2 is characterized by a rearrangement of communication patterns in the family, especially with the mother as a surrogate figure who becomes the center of daily dialogue. Through more open and supportive communication with the mother, participants slowly rebuilt their sense of security as well as negotiated the meaning of losing a father in their lives.

#### 2. Emotional Loss

In addition to physical loss, participants also experienced a more complex form of loss, namely emotional loss due to the absence of affective communication between father and son. P3, for example, has an absence of emotional communication even though his father is physically at home. The father's unstable mental state makes the interaction stiff, tense, and does not develop into warm two-way communication. P3 says:

"My father is at home, but it's like he's not really with us. It was difficult to talk, the atmosphere was stiff, so I chose to remain silent." (P3)

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A similar situation is experienced by P4, although it is triggered by prolonged conflicts between parents. The conflict gradually cuts off communication between P4 and his father, until he no longer has room for emotional dialogue. P4 explains: "I'm tired of being a mediator. For a long time, I chose to remain silent. From there, I felt like I had no place to talk to my father." (P4)

In P5, emotional loss occurs in the context of a very busy father and minimal involvement in the child's life. Although the father is still often at home, the conversations that occur are limited to work matters without any interest in the child's personal condition. P5 says:

"When my father comes home, all that is discussed is work. Never asked how I was doing." (P5)

The absence of this emotional communication makes participants feel unheard, misunderstood, and not validated. The impact is reflected in the way they relate and express themselves. Some participants admitted that they were more comfortable communicating with women than men, especially older male figures. P3 states:

"When talking to men, especially older ones, I get nervous easily." (P3)

Nevertheless, the process of rising the participants began with efforts to build communication with more supportive figures. P3 and P4 make mothers the main communication centers, while P5 uses digital spaces as an alternative to obtain emotional support and learn more positive communication patterns. For participants, the ability to rise does not happen instantly, but through the search and formation of new communication channels that provide a sense of security and validation.

### 3. Social Loss

Social loss can be seen in the communication barriers experienced by participants in the social environment due to the absence of the father figure. P1, for example, tells the story of a school experience that made him feel different when activities demanded his father's involvement. He stated:

"When I was in elementary school, every day my father was told to write a letter to my father. I was confused about what to write, because my father was no longer there." (P1)

This experience makes P1 tend to be silent and avoid communication situations that offend the father figure. P2 experienced a similar situation in a large family environment, where he felt awkward and lacked confidence when he had to explain his father's whereabouts. P2 reveals:

"When there is a big family event, I often feel clumsy because everyone comes with their father. It was strange when I was asked about my father, I was confused about what to say." (P2)

Meanwhile, P3 and P5 showed a more subtle form of social loss, namely difficulty communicating with other male figures, especially those who are older or have authority. The lack of examples of safe and supportive communication with fathers makes them tend to feel nervous and withdrawn in certain social situations. P3 states:

"I am more comfortable chatting with female friends. If I'm with a man, especially an older one, I get nervous quickly and find it difficult to start a conversation." (P3)

The results of the interviews show that the process of accepting the loss of the father figure in Generation Z girls takes place gradually, complex, and very personal. Each participant experienced various emotional dynamics, ranging from rejection, deep sadness, anger, to finally building a new meaning that was more adaptive to the reality of loss. This process is not linear, but repetitive and rotating, influenced by the context of life experiences, family relationships, and the social support they receive. In the entire process, communication—whether disconnected, inhibited, or reconstructed—becomes a central element that shapes the participant's acceptance experience.

### 1. Initial Rejection and Emptiness Phase

In the early phase of loss, the main disturbance felt by participants was not only emotional turmoil, but especially the disconnection of communication patterns that had previously been established with the father. P1, who lost his father to death, described the early days as a period of confusion as the communication habits that had been going on suddenly stopped. He still reflexively waits or tries to start a conversation, before realizing that the dialogue space has completely disappeared.

"In the past, my father always called me every morning. After he died, I sometimes still wait for that voice. I also wanted to tell you something, but I just remembered that he was gone." (P1)

This disconnection of dialogue creates a sense of emptiness that is much stronger than just physical loss.

Meanwhile, P2 who experienced a parental divorce interpreted the initial phase of loss as a period of rejection and confusion due to weakened communication with the father. The intensity of communication has drastically decreased and the response has been inconsistent, making him feel that the relationship can no longer be maintained.

"I had sent a message to my father, but he replied for a long time or only briefly. From there I felt like I was abandoned. It feels not only sad, but confused about what kind of communication to communicate again." (P2)

This phase of rejection suggests that the loss of the father figure not only stops physical presence, but also breaks the flow of communication that was previously a source of a sense of security, such as storytelling routines, emotional validation, and daily conversations. At this point, participants begin to realize that the process of moving on with life requires finding new ways of communicating, either with mothers, surrogate figures, or through self-reflection.

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### 2. Phase of Anger, Sadness, and Identity Crisis

The next stage is characterized by the appearance of intense emotions such as anger, sadness, disappointment, and feelings of worthlessness, which in some participants develop into an identity crisis, especially when entering adolescence. P3, who lives with a mentally disturbed father, described this phase as the most difficult period due to his inability to understand the father's condition.

"I often get angry for no reason, sometimes I get jealous when I see a close friend with my father. But after a while I realized, my father was also sick, not wanting to be close." (P3)

P4 experiences anger mixed with emotional exhaustion due to prolonged family conflicts. Since childhood, he has been positioned as a mediator, so that the emotional burden that should be borne by his parents is actually transferred to him.

"I'm tired, it feels like all their emotional burden is being thrown at me. I'm a kid, but I feel like I'm going to grow up before my time." (P4)

Meanwhile, P5 experiences sadness in the form of longing that continues to appear, especially when seeing representations of father-son relationships on social media.

"If I see the content of children with fathers, sometimes I am immediately sad. Not because of jealousy, but because I don't know what it's like to have a relationship like that." (P5)

This phase shows that participants are not only grieving for the lost father figure, but also for the relational experiences they never had, especially the warm two-way communication.

### 3. Reflection and Reinterpretation Phase

As time goes by, anger and sadness begin to be accompanied by deep reflection on the communication failures they expect from fathers. In this phase, the need to be heard, understood, and acknowledged becomes very strong, while communication that should be a bridge becomes a source of hurt.

P3 illustrates that the father's inconsistent response makes him question the meaning of his existence as a child.

"In the past, I often tried to talk to them, but sometimes the answers didn't connect. I'm angry because I don't think you love me. But the older I get, the more I realize, he is really sick... But it's still hard for me." (P3)

P4 experienced a similar stalemate. His desire to establish normal communication with his father is always hampered by parental conflicts that continue to infiltrate the conversation.

"I want to talk to my father like any other child, but every time I start talking, there must be problems with the mothers who participate. I'm a bit of a nerd because the atmosphere is always tense." (P4)

In P5, an overly formal and functional relationship creates a crisis of communication identity, as he never feels presented as an important subject in the conversation.

"When my father comes home, all that is discussed is work. Never asked how I was doing." (P5)

This phase suggests that the emotional wounds experienced by the participants are a direct consequence of disconnected, ineffective, or strained communication. The realization that these obstacles do not entirely come from them becomes the starting point for the process of rising and the search for more adaptive communication patterns.

### 4. Phase of Acceptance and Reconstruction of Meaning

The acceptance phase is characterized by the ability of participants to build a new understanding of their relationship with fathers. This acceptance is not always manifested through direct communication, but also through symbolic communication and self-narrative. P3 achieves acceptance when he understands the father's communication limitations due to the mental state he is experiencing.

"I'm no longer angry. I began to understand that my father did not have the ability to communicate like other fathers." (P3)

This reinterpretation encourages P3 to build symbolic communication through prayer, personal writings, and inner dialogue.

In P4, acceptance is formed through alternative communication networks outside of the family, such as close friends and campus communities.

"I can tell my friends about how I feel. I finally realized that I didn't always have to 'communicate' with my father to be able to resolve my own feelings." (P4)

Meanwhile, P5 shows acceptance through digital communication practices. By writing on blogs and social media, she reimagines the experience of loss into a narrative that is personally and socially meaningful.

"I write about losing on a personal blog. From there I felt more relieved." (P5)

Through this process, loss is no longer seen as a deficiency, but rather as part of the identity that makes up self-determination.

### 5. Emotional Dynamics as an Identity Negotiation Process

All the emotional dynamics experienced by the participants showed that the process of accepting the loss of the father figure was a complex communication journey. The loss of a father forced participants to confront disconnected, inhibited communication, and ultimately build alternative communication as a form of identity recovery.

P1 negotiates his identity by strengthening communication with the mother and taking a more active role in the family.

"After my father was gone, I discussed with my mother more often." (P1)

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P2 builds a new identity through affirmative communication with mothers and friends.

"Now I prefer to tell my mother or best friend." (P2)

P3 fosters empathy through reflection and dialogue with mothers and relatives.

"Now I can see the situation more clearly." (P3)

P4 builds a supportive communication network in the campus environment.

"It wasn't until after college that I felt I could tell my friends without fear of being judged." (P4)

P5 negotiates identity through digital communication.

"It turns out that many people respond and it makes me feel not alone." (P5)

The process of accepting the loss of a father figure in Generation Z fatherless girls is not just an emotional struggle, but a communicative process that allows them to process loss, reconstruct their self-meaning, and build a more resilient identity.

The loss of the father figure in Generation Z girls has a significant impact on the formation of self-concept and interpersonal relationship patterns. Based on the results of the interviews, the impact was mainly mediated by the experience of disconnected, inhibited, or unresponsive communication between father and son. The absence of father-son communication affects the way participants interpret themselves, manage emotions, and build relationships with others, especially male figures.

The absence of the father creates a communication void that has an impact on identity confusion, low self-esteem, and fragility of self-concept in the early phases of participants' lives. The lack of validation and affective communication from the father made some participants question their self-worth and worth. However, supportive communication from mothers, friends, counselors, and reflective intrapersonal communication serve as compensatory mechanisms that help them rebuild a more stable and resilient personal identity.

In the context of interpersonal relationships, the experience of incomplete father-son communication forms a pattern of careful, defensive, or anxious relationships, especially in interactions with male and partner figures. Some participants showed a tendency to avoidance communication and testing communication due to fear of rejection or abandonment. In contrast, participants who obtained a supportive post-loss communication environment tended to develop more open, selective, and adaptive communication patterns. Digital media also serves as an alternative space to obtain emotional support and social validation.

The loss of the father figure encourages Generation Z girls to undergo a complex identity negotiation process, which is an effort to negotiate their meaning, values, and social position in the midst of an incomplete family structure. This process takes place through intrapersonal, interpersonal, and digital communication.

Participants negotiated an identity between feelings of loss and the need to build self-integrity. Stopped communication with the father becomes the starting point of an identity crisis, while alternative communication—especially with the mother and oneself—becomes a means of reconstructing self-meaning. The identity of the "fatherless child" is not final, but rather redefined through a process of reflective and supportive communication.

In social relations, participants negotiate the limits of openness and self-protection. Past experiences shape caution in building trust, but over time and healthier communication experiences, they shift from avoidance patterns to controlled openness. Digital media acts as a space for identity negotiation, allowing participants to build a more empowered and resilient self-image.

Participants reconstructed the meaning of family, affection, and wholeness through compensatory communication with significant figures outside of the father. They no longer define the unity of the family based on biological structure, but rather on the quality of communication and a sense of emotional security.

In a cultural context that still idealizes a complete family, participants initially build defensive communication strategies to avoid stigma. However, a more supportive social environment allows them to display their identity more authentically and reject the label of "incomplete family."

## Communication Patterns of Fatherless Girls of Generation Z and the Formation of Emotional Resilience

Communication patterns are the main foundation in the process of forming emotional resilience of fatherless girls of Generation Z. Research findings show that the absence of a father figure not only creates a relational vacuum, but also interferes with the continuity of father-son communication which functions as a source of emotional validation. In responding to these conditions, participants built alternative communication patterns through relationships with mothers, intrapersonal communication, as well as social networks and digital spaces. These patterns allow them to reorganize their emotions, build social resilience, and negotiate their identities adaptively.

In the early phase of loss, most participants experienced family communication patterns characterized by emotional silence and avoidant communication. Topics about fathers tend to be avoided because grief, awkwardness, or fear of triggering conflict. However, over time, there has been a transformation towards a more dialogical communication pattern, especially through the role of mothers as substitute communication figures.

Mothers play a role in creating a safe space for emotional expression through openness, empathy, and validation of feelings. This pattern shows an increase in conversation orientation in the family, which allows the child to express sadness, anger, and

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longing without fear of being judged. This shift from a closed emotional climate to an open dialogue is an important foundation for participants' emotional recovery.

Within the framework of Family Communication Patterns Theory, the change reflects a shift from a conformity-oriented communication pattern to a more conversation-oriented pattern. Dialogical family communication functions not only as a means of releasing emotions, but also as a medium for reconstructing the meaning of loss.

Participants' emotional resilience is formed through communication functions that allow for the expression of emotions, validation of experiences, and reinterpretation of loss in a more adaptive manner. Interpersonal communication with the mother is a major source of emotional reinforcement, especially when the response given is empathetic and does not require the child to be "immediately strong".

In addition to interpersonal communication, intrapersonal communication also plays a significant role. Reflective practices such as journaling or symbolically expressing feelings serve as a form of internal dialogue to organize previously inhibited emotions. Through this process, participants are able to manage ambivalent feelings towards the father and channel emotions in a more constructive way. These findings show that emotional resilience is not born individually, but is constructed through therapeutic communication practices—both through dialogue with others and dialogue with oneself.

In addition to emotional resilience, communication also plays a role in building social resilience, which is the ability of participants to establish relationships, expand support networks, and gain social acceptance after loss. In the early stages, some participants showed a tendency to withdraw due to shame or fear of being stigmatized. However, involvement in new communication spaces, especially online communities and campus environments, helped them rebuild social trust.

Communication in online communities allows participants to find similar experiences (shared normalcy), expand communication networks (communication network building), and gain social validation without stigma pressure. Meanwhile, involvement in organizations and social activities serves as a means of social reintegration, where participants interpret themselves as valuable individuals through social contributions, rather than based on family structures.

Based on the overall findings, this study formulated a Communicative Resilience Model, which illustrates that the loss of the father figure is the starting point for father-son communication disorders characterized by silence, emotional distance, and absence of self-validation. This condition encourages participants to build alternative communication patterns as an adaptive response. The new communication patterns include:

1. interpersonal communication with the mother as a surrogate figure,
2. intrapersonal communication through self-reflection, and
3. digital and social communication through support networks.

From this pattern, two main forms of resilience develop, namely emotional resilience (the ability to manage and reinterpret emotions) and social resilience (the ability to build new relationships and support). Both forms of resilience boil down to the process of identity negotiation, where participants balance the experience of loss with the search for self-integrity.

This model confirms that communication in its various forms is a core mechanism that bridges the journey of Generation Z fatherless girls from the experience of loss to the formation of a more resilient, reflective, and adaptive identity.

### The Role of Digital Space in Building Communication Resilience for Generation Z

In the context of Generation Z communication that is highly connected to technology, the digital space serves as an important medium in building communication resilience for fatherless girls. Digital platforms such as social media, online forums, and virtual communities are not only channels for sharing experiences, but also provide alternative communication spaces when face-to-face communication in families is limited or hampered. Through managed self-disclosure practices, parasocial interactions, and online exchanges of emotional support, participants leveraged digital spaces to process loss, negotiate identity, and balance the need for emotional connection that could not be fully met through family communication.

From a communication perspective, activities such as writing public reflections, sharing narratives of loss, following motivational accounts, or joining a fatherless support community are forms of communicative coping strategies that strengthen participants' ability to manage emotions and interpret life experiences. The digital space also functions as a symbolic interaction arena, where participants rebuild their self-image, test personal messages, and gain social validation that was previously hampered by the dynamics of family communication. Thus, digital communication does not simply replace lost communication, but expands the space for dialogue that allows for a process of recovery, the production of new meanings, and the formation of resilience in a sustainable manner.

This subchapter discusses how fatherless girls Generation Z utilize digital space as part of their communication strategies in building resilience. The discussion focused on three main dimensions, namely: (1) the use of social media to find meaning, support, and inspirational figures; (2) self-representation and digital venting as a form of self-expression typical of Generation Z; and (3) virtual space as a medium of coping and expression of resilience that enriches the experience of phenomenological communication between the real world and the digital world.

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In the lives of Generation Z, online spaces are not only a place to socialize, but also an important arena for negotiating identities, expressing emotions, and building new meanings to life experiences. Based on the results of the interviews, all participants (P1–P5) showed that social media has a significant role in the formation of communication resilience, both as a space for searching for meaning, a source of emotional support, and a place to find inspirational figures that replace the symbolic function of the father figure. These findings suggest that for Generation Z's fatherless girls, the practice of communication extends beyond the realm of family and close friends, extending into digital spaces that allow communication across boundaries of experience and identity.

### 1. Social Media as a Space to Find the Meaning of Loss

Participant P1 revealed that interactions on social media helped her reinterpret the experience of losing her father through self-reflection and social identification. He often writes reflective messages on his anonymous TikTok account whenever he misses his father. These activities are not solely an expression of emotions, but a means to realize one's changes from time to time.

"I once wrote a message on TikTok ... It's not to be pitied, but to remind yourself that you're losing a part of growing up." (P1)

These reflective uploads are often accompanied by visual symbols such as photos of the afternoon sky or his late father's favorite song, which then received a lot of empathic responses. Based on documentation, one of P1's uploads received 299.9 thousand likes, 1,792 comments, and was shared 26.2 thousand times. P1 also often uploads representations of the emotional fortitude of fatherless girls who display cheerfulness as a form of resilience, even though behind them are the experience of deep loss. This phenomenon shows that the digital space becomes a container of reflective and symbolic communication, where the meaning of loss is processed into self-affirmation.

P2 means loss in a different way. He rarely writes explicitly about his father, but inserts reflective messages in personal uploads as a form of self-reinforcement and coping mechanism.

"I don't like to post sad things... It's like a prayer for me." (P2)

The documentation of P2's uploads shows the meaning-making process through symbolic communication that turns loss into a source of personal strength. Meanwhile, P3 uses social media as a safe space to write personal notes in the form of anonymous notes or tweets.

"I often write on Twitter in the middle of the night, not for other people, but for myself." (P3)

Supportive responses from other users reinforce a sense of social connectedness, even if communication is done anonymously. Different from P1–P3, P4 uses social media to find value and life lessons through self-growth and healing content. He interprets loss philosophically and builds collective meaning through symbolic interactions in the comment column.

P5 adds a creative dimension by producing video content with the theme of healing and self-reflection. The content creation process is seen as an intrapersonal dialogue as well as a means of sharing meaning with audiences who have similar experiences.

Based on triangulation of interview data and documentation, all participants used digital media as a space to search for the meaning of loss with reflective, expressive, interpretive, and creative communication styles. This practice shows the process of meaning reconstruction, which is a conscious effort to transform the narrative of grief into a source of growth and social strength.

### 2. Social Media as a Source of Emotional Support and Community

For fatherless girls of Generation Z, social media serves as a source of emotional support that brings a sense of connectedness. P2 and P3 revealed that interacting with the online community allows them to feel understood without having to explain the background of the loss in depth.

Online communities such as the WhatsApp group "Family Discussion" become a space for sharing experiences and emotional strengthening. These interactions reflect the function of social media as a resilient communication network, where individuals validate and normalize the experience of loss.

P1, P4, and P5 also affirm that emotional support in the digital space often comes from individuals who have similar experiences. This relationship forms virtual solidarity, in which participants become not only recipients, but also supporters. Social media thus serves as a healing community that allows for collective resilience building.

### 3. Social Media as a Source of Inspirational Figures

In addition to being a space for expression and support, social media is used by participants to find inspirational figures that function as a symbolic substitute for father figures. These figures are present through educational, motivational, and paternal narrative content that conveys the values of protection, wisdom, and compassion.

P1–P5 assessed that parasocial interaction with adult male public figures provided a sense of being guided and emotionally validated. These contents act as mediated fatherly messages, which are messages that provide affective and moral structure that are usually obtained through direct communication with the father.

For fatherless girls of Generation Z, the digital space serves as the main medium for emotional coping while expressing self-resilience. Social media is used as a safe space to organize emotions, channel a sense of loss, and affirm one's identity in the midst of the absence of a father figure. Through activities such as writing reflections, sharing symbolic visuals, creating content, and interacting with online communities, participants build a healing process that is both personal and social.

All participants showed a pattern of using digital space as a productive communication channel. P1 channels coping through visual uploads with a healing theme that is symbolic, P2 gains calm by reading healing narratives on social media, while P3 uses

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reflective writing as a form of personal therapy. After going through the stage of accepting loss, P4 and P5 shift their communication narrative from expressions of sadness to affirmative and inspirational messages, even making the digital space an arena for empowering themselves and others. Empathetic responses and audience support show that personal expression can evolve into a collective strength.

### Emotional Dynamics and Reconstructing the Meaning of Losing a Father

Losing the father figure is an existential emotional experience for girls, especially in the phase of self-identity formation. The absence of the father is not only interpreted as a physical loss, but also as a loss of affective support systems, sense of security, and identity validation that was previously built through paternal relationships (Tomar & Jayswal, 2024). For Generation Z, the meaning of loss becomes increasingly complex because it takes place in the midst of a digital era that opens up new spaces for self-reflection, emotional expression, and negotiation of meaning through online communication.

In the early stages of loss, participants (P1–P5) experienced communication disruption due to the disconnection of communication with their father, either due to death, divorce, or emotional absence. This communication void gives rise to confusion of meaning, silence, and unanswered questions. Thus, the sense of loss comes not only from the absence of the father figure, but especially from the cessation of communication that previously served as a source of clarity, closeness, and self-recognition.

In the perspective of communication theory of resilience (Buzzanell, 2010), this dynamic can be understood through two main mechanisms, namely affirming identity anchors and crafting normalcy. Fatherless girls seek to reaffirm their identities through narratives, relationships, and communication experiences that validate, while building a new form of "normality" after disappearance. Thus, the loss of a father is not only a source of grief, but also an arena of transformation of meaning that allows the formation of self-awareness and more reflective communication patterns.

The process of reconstructing meaning takes place through intrapersonal communication in the form of inner dialogue, reflective writing, and self-narrative. This inner communication becomes the basis for the formation of a new, more stable self-narrative, in which participants process disappointment, emotional distance, and self-identity as women who grow up without the presence of fathers. From the perspective of communication phenomenology, this condition reflects existential shock in the form of a disconnection of the symbolic dialogue between the child and the father figure which was previously an identity reference (Manen, 2023).

The incompatibility between expected communication and actual communication from the father creates a void of meaning that must be renegotiated. Therefore, the crisis experienced by the participants is not only emotional, but also a crisis of communication relations. The recovery process then takes place through interpersonal communication with mothers, siblings, friends, or other significant figures, as well as through online community support. This interaction functions as healing communication, which is communication that helps individuals validate emotions, rearrange meaning, and affirm self-identity.

Over time, some participants begin to enter a phase of transformation, where communication is used consciously to reconstruct the meaning of loss. P2 and P5, for example, begin to articulate the experience of loss through open conversation, reflective writing, and symbolic narratives. This process is in line with the concept of resilience-as-meaning-making (Theiss, 2018), which asserts that resilience is formed through communication practices that allow individuals to construct new meaning over traumatic experiences.

**Table 1. Communication Dynamics in the Meaning of Fatherless Loss in Fatherless Daughters**

| Dynamics Phase                                      | Key Characteristics                                                 | Emerging Forms of Communication                                                                    | The Process of Interpreting Loss                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Communication Disruption Phase                   | Sudden loss due to death, divorce, or emotional absence of a father | Silence pattern, withdrawal, lack of talk about fathers, internal communication shock              | The child realizes that there is a void of meaning due to the loss of a source of validation and paternal affection |
| 2. Meaning Negotiation Phase                        | The child begins to question loss and its impact                    | Inner dialogue, reflective writing, selective communication with mother/friend, emotional conflict | Loss is understood as a relational experience that needs to be reinterpreted                                        |
| 3. Communication-Based Meaning Reconstruction Phase | More stable reflection and acceptance                               | Reflective and affirmative communication, open dialogue, social and digital support                | Loss is reconstructed as a source of learning and identity strengthening (resilience)                               |

**Source:** Data processed by Researcher, November 2025

The emotional dynamics of fatherless girls in Generation Z show that the loss of a father is a communication event that triggers disruption, negotiation, and reconstruction of meaning in a sustainable manner. The three phases do not take place linearly

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but are interconnected and repeated as life experiences change. These findings confirm that resilience is not an innate trait, but rather the result of a reflective communication process that allows individuals to process loss as part of a more wholesome self-growth.

### Fatherless Girls' Communication Strategies in Building Emotional Resilience

The emotional resilience of girls who grow up without the presence of their father is not formed instantly, but rather through a continuous process of communication within and outside the family system. Communication serves as a primary medium that allows them to manage their sense of loss, build new emotional connections, and negotiate their identity in a not-so-ideal family situation. The findings of this study show that participants (P1–P5) use communication as an adaptive and regenerative strategy, both through direct interaction with mothers and surrogate figures, as well as through social relations and digital spaces.

The analysis of this communication strategy is based on family communication patterns theory (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002), which emphasizes two main orientations in family communication, namely conversation orientation and conformity orientation. Conversation orientation refers to the openness of family members in expressing thoughts and emotions, while conformity orientation deals with the emphasis on uniformity of values, harmony, and obedience. In the context of a fatherless family, girls are in a position to balance the need for emotional expression with the demands of maintaining the stability of the remaining family relationships.

The findings show that empathic communication with mothers is the main strategy in building emotional resilience. P1, P2, and P5 place the mother as an emotional anchor as well as a co-narrator in the process of interpreting the meaning of losing her father. Open-ended conversations about memories, grief, and post-loss challenges reflect a high conversation orientation. This pattern allows the child to channel emotions safely while strengthening the emotional bond with the mother. In line with the findings of Vladislav et al. (2024), families with a high conversational orientation tend to produce more resilient individuals because emotions are processed through dialogue, not repressed.

In addition to mothers, some participants (especially P3 and P4) built communicative relationships with surrogate figures such as uncles, grandfathers, or male teachers. This relationship shows an adaptive communication strategy, in which the child does not replace the role of the father in its entirety, but builds alternative emotional connections that still respect the structure and values of the family. This pattern reflects a moderate conformity orientation, which is an effort to maintain harmony while still opening up a space for selective and supportive dialogue.

In the context of Generation Z, communication strategies do not stop at the family space, but extend to social and digital spaces. P3, P4, and P5 use social media as a means of reflective expression through writing, video, or symbolic content uploads. This practice can be understood as conversation extension, which is the expansion of the conversation space to a wider social realm. Through digital communication, participants gain two main benefits at once: self-expression and social validation. This phenomenon is in line with the concept of digital resilience narrative (Rolbiecki et al., 2021), in which individuals rewrite self-narratives as part of the psychological recovery process.

One of the important findings of this study is the ability of participants to navigate the balance between the need for conversation orientation and the demand to maintain harmony (conformity orientation). P2 and P5 show communicative awareness by adjusting the way and time of expressing emotions so as not to burden the mother or family. This strategy reflects the maturity of communication, where the expression of emotions is carried out in an empathetic and responsible manner. As Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) emphasize, the ability to manage the tension between expression and harmony is an important foundation for an individual's emotional adaptation and resilience.

**Table 2.** Comparison of Conversation Orientation and Conformity Orientation in the Communication Strategy of Fatherless Girls

| Aspects                           | Conversation Orientation                                                                                                                                        | Compliance Orientation                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Participant Data Findings (P1–P5) | P1 and P2 emphasize the importance of talking honestly with your mother to calm down. P3 expresses feelings through social media as a form of digital openness. | P4 and P5 choose to share stories on a limited basis to maintain the emotional condition of the mother and family harmony. |
| Pros                              | Strengthen emotional closeness and confidence in expressing feelings.                                                                                           | Foster emotional discipline and a sense of responsibility for family welfare.                                              |
| Challenge                         | It has the potential to cause tension if the recipient is not emotionally ready.                                                                                | It risks suppressing emotions and slowing down the psychological recovery process.                                         |
| Analytical Conclusions            | Supporting reflective resilience and self-identity formation through open communication.                                                                        | It supports emotional stability and social harmony, but it needs to be balanced so as not to suppress self-expression.     |

**Source:** Data processed by Researcher, November 2025

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### **Digital Space as a Platform for Identity Negotiation and Social Support**

For fatherless girls of Generation Z, the digital space serves as a symbolic space to negotiate identities, channel emotions, and build social support. Social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter (X) are becoming alternative communication arenas that allow the expression of the experience of loss without stigma. Through reflective uploads, personal narratives, and interaction with the online community, participants rebuilt their sense of self that had been shaken by the absence of the father figure.

The findings show that digital space is used as a form of coping communication, such as writing stories of loss, consuming motivational content, and having dialogues in the comment column. This practice is in line with the concept of putting alternative logics to use (Buzzanell, 2010), where individuals interpret suffering as an opportunity for transformation. In addition, the digital space also functions as a communication network that expands emotional support beyond the nuclear family, acting as a resource exchange system that provides validation and collective solidarity.

However, the use of digital space is also ambivalent. Exposure to family idealized content has the potential to trigger emotional dissonance. Therefore, resilience is shown through the ability of participants to filter information, maintain privacy, and use digital media reflectively. In this context, the digital space is not an escape, but a constructive medium to build self-meaning and a sense of social connectedness.

### **Synthesis: The Spiral Pattern of Communication Resilience**

Based on the overall findings, this study developed a communication resilience spiral model that illustrates that the resilience of fatherless girls of Generation Z is formed through a gradual but non-linear communication process. The loss of a father triggers communication disruption at the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels, characterized by silence, confusion of meaning, and difficulty expressing emotions.

The next stage is characterized by adaptive communication strategies through supportive dialogue with mothers, self-reflection, and the search for validation from other significant figures. Furthermore, the digital space becomes an arena for communication expansion to negotiate identities, build support networks, and rewrite self-narratives. These three processes form a spiral pattern that keeps repeating each time an individual encounters a new emotional trigger.

This communication resilience spiral moves on four main levels:

1. Intrapersonal: inner reflection and reconstruction of the meaning of loss.
2. Interpersonal: communication with mothers, family, and surrogate figures.
3. Social: interaction with friends and community as social validation.
4. Digital: online spaces as an arena for identity negotiation and resilience networks.

The four dimensions are intertwined in a spiral pattern that enriches the individual's understanding, strength, and emotional maturity. Thus, the resilience of fatherless girls is understood as a dynamic, reflective, and sustainable process of social communication, rather than as the result of a single adaptation. Communication becomes the main medium that allows them to integrate loss, vulnerability and strength into a more complete self.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The communication resilience of Generation Z girls in fatherless families in the city of Surabaya is formed through a gradual and dynamic process involving intrapersonal reflection, empathic communication within the family, and the use of social and digital spaces as a medium for expression, recovery, and identity negotiation. The absence of a father figure is interpreted ambivalently as a source of emotional wounds as well as a trigger for strengthening self-awareness, which is managed through a communication pattern that balances emotional openness (conversation orientation) and relationship harmony (conformity orientation). Digital spaces play a significant role as a coping and social support platform that allows participants to rewrite their self-narratives in a reflective and constructive way. Based on these findings, this study recommends strengthening empathic and consistent family communication, especially the role of mothers and surrogate figures as providers of emotional safe spaces; the development of a school environment that is responsive to the psychosocial needs of fatherless students through emotional literacy and counseling services; the application of psychological interventions based on narrative and digital communication that are in accordance with the character of Generation Z; and the formulation of public policies that support single families and the digital safety of adolescent girls. Academically, further research is suggested to expand the subject and methodological approach to enrich the understanding of communication resilience in the context of genderless and cross-cultural fatherlessness, so that communication can continue to be interpreted not only as a means of message exchange, but as a space for sustainable recovery, empowerment, and identity reconstruction.

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