

Phenomenological Study of Forgiveness in Adolescents with Dysfunction Family

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Abstract. *This study aims to determine the forgiveness of adolescents who do not get emotional family support. The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach. Until this study were teenagers who live in Surakarta with a sample of four people. The results showed that three subjects had forgiven their parents' behavior and one subject had not forgiven their parents.*

Keyword : *disfungsi, forgives, family*

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Introduction

The family is the smallest unit of society formed through a legitimate marriage and is the smallest social institution of humans as social beings, which determines the types of community members (Basir et al., 2019; Wahidin, 2017). According to Paterson (in Tyas et al., 2017), each family member has different roles in fulfilling family functions so that their responsibilities can be carried out effectively. When family functions are maximally fulfilled, family members will be able to enjoy life in a pleasant and proper manner, and each member will be able to actualize themselves according to their potential and talents (Hisyam et al., 2019).

Bern (in Simbolon, 2022) states that the family has basic functions, namely socialization and education functions, reproduction, economic support, social role assignment, and emotional support. (1) The socialization and education function of the

family involves passing on beliefs, values, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and techniques to the next generation. (2) In the reproduction function, the family plays a role in maintaining the human population. (3) A family should be able to provide life assurance, shelter, and food as economic support for the family. (4) The social role assignment function indicates that the family provides identity, such as ethnic, socioeconomic, racial, religious, and gender roles to each of its members. (5) In the emotional support function, the family plays a significant role in the psychological development of children because the family is the primary and initial social environment for them (Andriyani, 2016). The social interactions provided by the family are nurturing, profound, and resilient, which can create a sense of security for children and other family members (Simbolon, 2022).

When children enter adolescence, which, according to Kroger, ranges from 11 to 22 years old, they need physical, social, and psychological support in their development (Rizqiyah & Dewi, 2021; Widiyasavitri, 2016). According to Hurlock (in Hasiolan, 2015), emotional support from the family that can be given to adolescents includes attention, trust, and acceptance, which will increase their happiness. In reality, many families are still unable to provide emotional support to their adolescents (Irawan & Nuryawati, 2024). Based on preliminary studies conducted by researchers through interviews with adolescents, these adolescents reported not receiving emotional support, experiencing physical violence, and being affected by disfunction family.

Dysfunctional families can result in members experiencing suffering, pain, and hardship due to poor basic family characteristics (Indrawati et al., 2014). Individuals who have been victims of family dysfunction can perpetuate dysfunctional family patterns (Indrawati et al., 2014). Adolescents who do not receive proper emotional support may become confused when facing problems, leading to increased stress (Agustina & Widyastuti, 2021). This can be caused by the lack of love, security, and genuine affection, resulting in individuals feeling uncomfortable, fearful, inferior, ashamed, and anxious when interacting with others, leading to low self-esteem

(Hasiolan, 2015). To help adolescents who lack emotional support develop good relationships with others and improve their relationships with their parents, a method for healing emotional wounds in adolescents is needed (Soumokil-Maila et al., 2022).

One way to achieve this is by trying to forgive their parents, or practicing forgiveness. According to (McCullough et al., 1997), forgiveness is the motivation of an individual to avoid the perpetrator, refrain from seeking revenge, and be willing to maintain a positive relationship with the perpetrator (Ariyani, 2018). According to McCullough, forgiveness has three aspects: the motivation to withdraw and avoid, the desire for revenge, and the motivation to establish a good relationship with the person who has caused harm (Juniatin & Khoirunnisa, 2022). Forgiving behavior can provide psychological benefits and serve as effective therapy to release someone from feelings of guilt and anger (Nuryadi et al., 2017).

This is in line with the research conducted by Harfea & Savira (2021) that a person who has forgiven and made peace will have the ability to forgive, let go, find new meaning in their experiences, and eliminate negative emotions. Based on this, the aim of this study is to understand the picture of forgiveness in adolescents who do not receive emotional support from their families.

Method

The variable in this study is forgiveness. The approach used in this research is a phenomenological qualitative approach, which is employed to understand and interpret a particular phenomenon. In this study, there are four individuals who constitute the population, all of whom are adolescents from the Surakarta area. The sample is the same as the population because the number of respondents in this study is small, so the sample equals the population, which is 4 individuals, with the following criteria:

1. Adolescents aged 18-20 years
2. Male and Female

3. Do not receive emotional support from their families

In this study, semi-structured interviews are used as the data collection tool because they provide an opportunity for researchers to listen to and understand the pure experiences from the respondents' perspectives. The data analysis technique employs qualitative descriptive methods following the Miles and Huberman model, which involves data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

Results

From the interviews conducted with the research participants, the following is the presentation of the data analysis results.

Source of Hurt

Individuals in dysfunctional families experience problems both psychologically and physically. A dysfunctional family is a condition where any factor disrupts the ideal functioning of the family. Every family has issues such as arguments, misunderstandings, hurt feelings, and economic crises. One source of emotional hurt experienced by individuals from such families is parents who are overly controlling, do not allow their children to develop their own identities, are harsh in their treatment, and demand that their children meet their expectations. As stated by RI below.

“My parents didn't support me when I decided who I wanted to be friends with; they controlled everything and didn't trust me. I really wanted to go to a Hindu middle school, but my father opposed it, even though many of my Muslim friends were also there. So I had to give in to my father and continue middle school at a boarding school as he wanted. Then, when I wanted to go to college here, they didn't support me at first either because it was too far from home, so my father didn't allow it” (RI, November 16, 2022).

“[...] Another incident that I found really sad was when I was scolded and even beaten because I went out to play with my friends. The beating traumatized me, and now I'm too scared to break my parents' rules again” (RI, November 16, 2022).

Such treatment caused RI to experience severe trauma. The overly burdensome rules, lack of support for the child's choices, and the violence inflicted on RI became sources of emotional hurt from the family. This was also experienced by B, who explained that he had received physical abuse from his father

“As for the traumatic experiences, I've been raised strictly since I was little, really strict, my father was strict. But it was only towards me; my younger siblings were left alone. There was even an incident where my head was stepped on” (B, November 12, 2022)

Another family issue is a broken family. This was experienced by ... and FZ. The condition of a broken family made them rarely communicate, seldom meet, and long for the presence of those family members. ... expressed that they wanted their family to be whole again..

[...] Deep down, I want to go back, I want my family to be whole again because recently we even had to find a lawyer for my mother, who is considering divorcing her husband outside the family. So, yes, I want us to go back and be whole again...” (FE, November 26, 2022).

“Since my parents separated, I've been living with my father, but I also lived with my mother for about three years during elementary school” (FZ, November 26, 2022).

Advoidance Motivation

One aspect of forgiveness is Avoidance Motivation, which is the individual's ability to reduce the motivation to avoid social contact with the person in question. The four subjects in this study have different reasons for withdrawing from their families. Some have successfully avoided meeting their families, while others still run away or isolate themselves when facing problems.

RI stated that before practicing forgiveness, they would always lock themselves in their room after being scolded and punished by their parents. During this time, RI

began to be brave enough to explain and communicate with their parents about the things they wanted to do.

“Nowadays, I explain more about why I did what my parents considered wrong, and after that, I apologize” (RI, November 18, 2022).

B stated that when facing problems with their family, they avoid interacting with their parents. For B, it's better to go outside than to interact with family members when there are family issues.

“I often run away; I go outside the house and don't know when I'll come back, as long as I'm out” (B, November 12, 2021).

“I prefer to go outside the house rather than stay at home and interact with my family” (B, November 18, 2022).

“I rarely go out unless I'm specifically called for meals or to bathe; otherwise, I stay in my room, locked in (B, November 12, 2022).

FE revealed that in the past, when feeling uncomfortable with their family, they would leave and not return home for several months. During this time, FE said that their relationship with their parents was good, with frequent communication and interaction when at home.

“Yes, I did that; back in high school, I didn't come home for several months” (FE, November 30, 2022).

During this time, FE mentioned that the relationship with their parents was good, with frequent communication and interaction at home, discussing various topics. Similarly, FZ always maintains interaction with their father and does not avoid meeting him.

“Yes, we talk about many things, sometimes about college, sometimes about work, and sometimes about the plants in front of the house while cleaning them” (FE, November 30, 2022).

“I don't avoid him; it's just usual. When I meet my father, it's just small talk” (FZ, November 19, 2022).

Revenge Motivations

The individual's ability to reduce the motivation to seek revenge against those who have hurt them. From the interviews conducted, none of the four subjects expressed a desire to seek revenge against their parents for what they have done. This can be seen from the statements below.

"[...] So, when it comes to revenge, I have no intention at all, even though I still want to be free and have my choices supported, but revenge is not something I want" (RI, November 18, 2022).

"I don't seek revenge; it's not that severe. I can still control myself not to hurt others" (B, November 18, 2022).

"Even though I was raised harshly as a child, with real physical punishment, I still don't have the intention of seeking revenge (FE, November 30, 2022).

"I don't think there is any" (FZ, November 19, 2022).

From the explanations above, it can be concluded that none of the four subjects have feelings or intentions of seeking revenge against their family members. The low revenge motivation indicates that the subjects are increasingly moving towards the state of forgiveness

Benevolence Motivations

The desire to act kindly, behave well, and maintain relationships with those who have hurt them. Benevolence Motivation is a positive dimension of forgiveness, where subjects with a strong drive to do good towards their family members begin to empathize and communicate well with them, indicating that they have forgiven. In this case, all four subjects exhibit Benevolence Motivation, which enables them to forgive their parents.

"So, I am learning not to get angry, not to be upset, or to contradict what my parents say" (RI, November 18, 2022)

“But, you know, trying to forget what was done. But yes, I have forgiven, forgiven sincerely” (B, November 18, 2022).

“Forgiveness is already there; as for the relationship, it’s fine now. It’s not as horrible as before; now it’s more relaxed. Now that we are older, we understand better, and the relationship with my parents has improved” (FE, November 30, 2022).

“Yes, I am learning to appreciate my parents' decisions and still practice manners and ethics when meeting them. That’s about it” (FZ, November 19, 2022).

Beginning of Forgiveness

The emotional wounds felt by each individual can be felt throughout their life, but there comes a time when they can forgive the mistakes and pain they have experienced. Forgiveness is influenced by several factors that support an individual in this process.

The strongest influence in practicing forgiveness is the drive from within the individual themselves, particularly when they can understand the conditions, reasons, and circumstances of their parents. RI began to understand and excuse what their parents did by recognizing how difficult it is to be a parent. In the interview, RI said :

“Because now I also know how hard it is for parents to take care of a daughter” (RI, November 18, 2022).

B began to forgive their parents by understanding that their parents would always be with them forever, and therefore, B could forgive them sincerely for everything they had done.

“Because they are my parents. Whether I like it or not, I will always be with them” ((B, November 12, 2022).

“Because my mother gave birth to me, which took great effort, and they also guided me, so I have to forgive them” (FZ, November 19, 2022).

One external factor that drives individuals to practice forgiveness is their understanding of religious values. A strong appreciation of their religion helps them

find peace and begin to forgive their parents. RI and B stated that their religion teaches them to respect their parents.

“Because I once heard a sermon about how we must obey our parents. So I am learning not to get angry, upset, or contradict what my parents say” (RI, November 18, 2022).

“Religious values also teach us to 'honor your parents, especially your mother, because heaven lies at your mother's feet. Take the good from your parents and leave the negative behind” (B, November 12, 2022).

“Yes, of course. I used to be active in the mosque, Sunday school, competing for the microphone for the call to prayer, hiding... but now it's rare. Now I often go to the campus mosque” (FE, November 30, 2022).

“Yes, definitely. In our religion, we are also taught to be devoted to our parents and to learn to forgive others' mistakes” (FZ, November 23, 2022).

The Benefits of Forgiveness for Each Individual

Forgiveness is one way to release feelings of disappointment, hurt, anxiety, and negative emotions caused by someone's unfavorable behavior. Individuals who successfully practice forgiveness gain benefits and can see the positive side of the problems they encounter. Each person perceives the positive aspects of forgiveness differently.

A. Learning to see from the perspective of the person who caused the hurt.

RI takes the positive aspect of forgiveness by learning that when facing family problems, one should not avoid them but rather communicate effectively with parents. Additionally, RI learns to understand their parents' behavior from a different perspective.

“Yes, definitely. I've realized that open communication between parents and children is really important. And what my parents want is because they worry about me, even if their way is different from most parents, hahaha” (RI, November 19, 2022).

B. Self-Acceptance

The family problems experienced by B taught him self-acceptance, allowing him to wholeheartedly accept the life he is living.

“There is a positive side. Like becoming independent, and then more self-accepting, accepting the reality, it’s more about accepting everything” (B, November 24, 2022).

C. Gratitude

Forgiveness has a positive effect on FE, making him a more positive person and more appreciative of his life, as many out there are not as fortunate as FE.

“Eee yes, just living my days as usual, even though my family is negative, many people say I’m still lucky, even if my parents are gone, I still have a clear path and am willing to go to school. Many out there, when left by their parents, usually become delinquents, thugs, or drunkards, but because my environment is positive, alhamdulillah until now I stay positive, insyaallah” (FE, November 30, 2022).

D. Commitment to Independence

The family issues have taught FZ to be independent and responsible for himself in meeting his personal needs. Additionally, FZ appreciates the time spent with his family more.

“I have learned to value time with my family more, become more independent, and work hard to meet my personal needs” (FZ, November 23, 2022).

Discuss

The four research participants, namely RI, B, FE, and FZ, have experienced much pain due to their dysfunctional family conditions. Family dysfunction refers to a state in which the family’s functions are not operating effectively (Putri et al., 2020).

Physical violence perpetrated by parents has caused severe trauma for the research participants. The three subjects—RI, B, and FE—experienced physical abuse

during their childhood. RI, B, and FE all endured harsh and authoritarian parenting from their fathers. RI's parents exhibited controlling behavior. According to Forward (as cited in Indrawati et al., 2014), controlling parents use inappropriate methods to manage their children, which can hinder the child's development. RI received physical punishment for his mistakes, leading to trauma and restrictions on playing with friends. Additionally, harsh parenting causes trauma and inflicts both physical and psychological wounds (Indrawati et al., 2014). This was also the case for B and FE, who were raised harshly by their parents since childhood. Another family issue is the lack of a complete family structure. FZ's family situation involves parents who have been separated since his childhood.

Forgiveness, according to (McCullough, 2000), has three aspects: the motivation to withdraw and avoid, the desire for revenge, and the motivation to maintain a good relationship with the person who has caused harm (Juniatin & Khoirunnisa, 2022). The first aspect of forgiveness, Avoidance Motivations, refers to the motivation to avoid social contact or interaction with the person who has caused harm. This is evident in B, who still avoids his family by leaving the house and staying alone in his room with the door locked. Similarly, participant FE previously avoided interacting with or even meeting family members by leaving for several months. However, FE has now reduced Avoidance Motivations towards his family, leading to improved interactions and more frequent communication, especially with his father. RI also used to isolate himself in his room when facing family problems but has learned to communicate openly with his parents about relevant issues rather than avoiding them by locking himself away. In contrast, participant FZ never had the desire to avoid his parents. FZ has maintained a good relationship and interaction with both parents, even though they have been separated since FZ was a child.

The second aspect, Revenge Motivations, refers to the motivation to seek revenge for the actions of those who have caused harm. In this aspect, none of the four participants harbored any desire for revenge against their parents. Individuals with low levels of revenge motivation are more likely to move closer to forgiveness.

The third aspect, Benevolence Motivation, refers to the desire to do good and maintain relationships with those who have caused harm. According to the study, all four participants are able to continue being kind and maintain relationships with their families. For RI, despite his parents still imposing restrictions, he has learned not to be angry or upset with them. Similarly, FZ has learned to accept decisions and act respectfully towards his parents as a matter of etiquette and decorum. Both B and FZ have forgiven their parents' mistakes sincerely, as evidenced by FZ's more relaxed interactions with his family. In contrast, while B has forgiven his parents, he still avoids interacting with them.

As time passed, the participants began to reach a stage where they started to forgive their parents' actions. The internal drive to forgive stemmed from an awareness of understanding their parents' conditions. RI realized the difficulty of raising a daughter and thus began to forgive his parents' actions and accept their rules. Both B and FZ acknowledged that their parents would be with them forever and that their mother, who gave birth to them, should be forgiven regardless of the circumstances. The most significant supporting factor in encouraging the participants was their understanding of religious values. A deep appreciation of religious values plays a crucial role in forgiveness towards those who have caused harm, enabling all four participants to accept and forgive their parents' actions.

Individuals who successfully practice forgiveness experience changes in their lives. After successfully forgiving, RI has learned to view things from a different perspective and now values the importance of communication with his family more. For B, forgiving his parents has led to increased self-acceptance. According to Germer, self-acceptance involves having a positive feeling towards oneself by acknowledging and accepting one's own strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, B has learned to accept the circumstances and whatever happens in his life. The family issues experienced by FE have made him a more grateful person for the life he leads. After successfully forgiving, FZ has become more independent, responsible for his own life, and values the time spent with his parents more.

Conclusions

This study examines forgiveness in adolescents who did not receive emotional support from their families due to physical abuse and the impact of parental divorce. The subjects RI, FZ, and FE have forgiven both of their parents. However, the subject B has not yet fully forgiven his parents because he still avoids interacting with them. The factors influencing adolescent forgiveness include the individual's awareness of their parents' conditions and circumstances. The driving factor for forgiving their parents' behavior is religiosity or understanding of religious values. After practicing forgiveness, the subjects were able to derive positive aspects from their family problems, such as learning to see from the perspective of those who caused harm, achieving self-acceptance, experiencing gratitude, and committing to independence.

Summary

Based on the research findings, the recommendations are as follows (1) For the Research Subjects: For the subjects who have not yet fully forgiven their parents, it is suggested that they work towards complete forgiveness and avoid avoiding interactions with their parents. (2) For Future Researchers: Future researchers are advised to study subjects with similar backgrounds of emotional dysfunction but using different criteria.

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