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Loss Of The Role Of The Father Since Childhood: Trauma And Self-Defense Mechanisms In The Perspective Of Psychoanalytic Theory

Auliyah Reski Sagita[1], Arianda[2], Agostinho Gomes[3]
[1,2]Bone State Islamic Religious Institute
[3]UIN Palopo
*e-mail: Auliyahreski44@gmail.com, Ariandaira17@gmail.com, agostinhofernandes@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT
Losing a father figure in childhood is an emotional experience that can have a significant impact on personality development, emotional stability, and social relationships until adulthood. In the perspective of psychoanalysis, this experience is understood as an initial trauma that affects the dynamics of the id, ego, and superego. This paper analyzes the loss of the father figure through the classical psychoanalytic approach of Sigmund Freud and contemporary thinkers such as Klein, Winnicott, and Bowlby. The method used is a literature study of developmental theories, object relations, attachments, and self-defense mechanisms. The results of the study show that the loss of a father can trigger basic anxiety, disturbances in emotional regulation, the use of self-defense mechanisms (repression, denial, displacement), and form a pattern of maladaptive interpersonal relationships. This trauma also affects parenting patterns in adulthood, such as hyperprotective tendencies as a form of emotional compensation. This study confirms the importance of psychodynamic interventions, parenting learning, and spiritual approaches to help individuals come to terms with past trauma and prevent the transmission of trauma between generations.

INTRODUCTION

Family is the main context in children's psychological development, where early relationships with parental figures play a major role in personality formation, emotional regulation, and the ability to establish social relationships. In the family structure, the father has a distinctive psychological function, not only as a provider of material needs, but also as a figure of authority, emotional protection, and a setter of boundaries and rules. Losing a father's role since childhood—whether due to death, divorce, work migration, or emotional absence—can be a significant experience that has the potential to have long-term psychological impacts (Lamb, 2015).

In the study of contemporary psychology, the loss of the father figure is increasingly understood not only as the absence of a physical figure, but as a relational void that affects the development of emotions and the structure of children's personalities. Children who grow up without a consistent paternal role often experience emotional vulnerability, difficulty building a sense of security, and obstacles in the formation of self-identity. This condition becomes even more complex when the

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experience of loss occurs in the early developmental phase, when the child does not have the adequate psychological capacity to interpret and process emotional experiences adaptively (Cabrera et al., 2018).

From the perspective of psychoanalysis, childhood is a crucial period that determines the personality dynamics of a person in adulthood. Early experiences involving significant figures, including fathers, will be internalized in the subconscious and form patterns of affection, relationships, and self-defense mechanisms. Psychoanalysis views the loss of the father figure as a form of developmental trauma, which is trauma that does not always appear explicitly, but is stored in the unconscious and affects individual behavior latently (Fonagy et al., 2019).

The trauma of losing the role of a father is often not directly realized by the individual. Children can suppress feelings of loss, anger, or disappointment as a form of adaptation to situations that they cannot control. In the framework of psychoanalysis, this process is known as repression, which is a self-defense mechanism that functions to remove painful emotional experiences from consciousness. However, these repressed experiences do not disappear, but remain active in influencing personality structure and have the potential to reappear in the form of anxiety, interpersonal relationship difficulties, or emotional conflicts in adulthood (Cramer, 2015).

The development of contemporary psychoanalytic theories expands the understanding of the impact of the loss of the father figure through the approach of object relations and attachments. Object relationship theory emphasizes that the child's initial relationship with the caregiver figure forms an internal representation of the self and others. The absence of the father can create unstable internal objects, so individuals tend to experience insecurity, emotional dependence, or difficulty trusting others in interpersonal relationships (Mitchell & Black, 2016). The father in this context is not only understood as a concrete individual, but as a symbolic figure who affects the emotional balance of the child.

The attachment theory that has developed in modern psychology also emphasizes the importance of the role of the father as a secondary attachment figure that contributes to the formation of a secure base. Bowlby emphasizes that failure to form a secure attachment can increase the risk of emotional regulatory disorders and insecure relationship patterns in adulthood. Recent studies show that individuals who experience the loss of paternal roles since childhood are more prone to exhibit anxious or avoidant attachment patterns, which impacts the quality of their romantic and social relationships later in life (Bowlby and Holmes, 2017).

In the face of anxiety and inner conflict due to the loss of the father figure, the individual unconsciously develops various self-defense mechanisms. Mechanisms such as denial, displacement, projection, and emotional compensation are often used to reduce the anxiety that comes from the experience of loss. Although self-defense mechanisms function to protect the ego, their excessive use can hinder healthy emotional development and reinforce maladaptive relationship patterns (Cramer, 2015).

Furthermore, the trauma of losing the role of a father in childhood also has implications for an individual's parenting pattern as he enters the adult phase. From a psychoanalytic perspective, individuals who have experienced loss often seek to prevent the recurrence of trauma in the next generation. It can manifest in the form of hyperprotective parenting, excessive control, or intense emotional involvement with the child. This phenomenon is related to the concept of repetition compulsion, which is the unconscious urge to repeat or "fix" past traumatic experiences through new relationships (Fonagy et al., 2019).

However, not all individuals who experience the loss of a father figure will be trapped in a maladaptive pattern. With adequate relational support, self-reflection, and appropriate psychological interventions, individuals have the opportunity to break the chain of intergenerational trauma. In this context, psychodynamic approaches, parenting learning, and spiritual approaches can play an important role in helping individuals come to terms with past experiences and build healthier relationship patterns.

Based on this exposure, the study of the loss of father's role since childhood is important to understand the dynamics of trauma, self-defense mechanisms, and its impact on personality development. This article aims to analyze the phenomenon of losing the role of the father since childhood from the perspective of psychoanalytic theory, by highlighting the trauma process, the dynamics of the subconscious, as well as the self-defense mechanisms that develop in response to the experience.

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METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with the literature study method (library research). This method was chosen because the research aims to analyze conceptually and theoretically the phenomenon of losing the role of the father since childhood in the perspective of psychoanalysis. Research data was obtained from various written sources in the form of psychology and psychoanalysis textbooks, scientific journal articles, and academic publications relevant to the topics of trauma, self-defense mechanisms, object relations, and attachment theory. The literature used is focused on scientific sources published in the last ten years to ensure the relevance and novelty of the study.

Data analysis techniques are carried out through the process of identification, classification, and interpretation of the main concepts found in the literature. The researcher examined the relationship between the loss of the role of the father, unconscious dynamics, developmental trauma, and self-defense mechanisms within the framework of psychoanalytic theory. The analysis was carried out in a descriptive-analytical manner by comparing the views of classical and contemporary psychoanalytic figures to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the psychological impact of the loss of the father figure and its implications on relationship and parenting patterns in adulthood.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Losing the Father's Role as a Psychological Trauma and the Challenge of Da'wah

Based on the results of a study of various articles in psychology and da'wah journals in Indonesia, the loss of the role of the father since childhood is understood as a psychological experience that is traumatic and has a long-term impact on the development of emotions, personalities, and individual relationship patterns. In the context of religious Indonesian society, the loss of the father figure not only has an impact on the psychological aspect, but also on the formation of religious values and the internalization of da'wah messages in the family (Hasanah, 2019).

Several studies show that fathers have a strategic role as a value educator, moral role model, and religious authority figure in the family. The absence of the father causes the child to lose a reference figure in understanding the concepts of responsibility, discipline, and spiritual leadership. From the perspective of da'wah psychology, this condition is a challenge because the family is the first mad'u in the process of internalizing Islamic values (Munir & Ilahi, 2018).

Trauma, Unconscious, and Basic Anxiety Dynamics

The results of the analysis show that the loss of a father since childhood often causes basic anxiety stored in the individual's subconscious. Research by Rahmawati and Hidayat (2020) found that individuals with the experience of losing a father figure show a tendency to relate anxiety, fear of rejection, and difficulty managing negative emotions. This condition is in line with the psychoanalytic view that untreated childhood trauma will remain active in the unconscious and affect behavior in adulthood.

In the context of da'wah psychology, this trauma can hinder the acceptance of da'wah messages that emphasize the concept of divinity as a protective figure (Allah as Al-Ab and Al-Hafizh). Individuals with the trauma of losing their father tend to have difficulty trusting authority figures, including religious authorities, so they require a more empathetic and psychodynamic approach to da'wah (Fauzi, 2021).

Self-Defense Mechanisms and Religious Coping Strategies

Literature review shows that individuals who lose the role of father since childhood develop various self-defense mechanisms, such as repression, denial, displacement, and emotional compensation. Research by Sari and Nugroho (2018) revealed that this defense mechanism often functions as an initial coping strategy to reduce feelings of loss and anxiety, but has the potential to become maladaptive if not accompanied by healthy emotional processing.

In the psychology of da'wah, this self-defense mechanism can be directed constructively through a spiritual approach and religious guidance. Several studies show that religious activities such as prayer, dhikr, and spiritual reflection can function as sublimation, which is the diversion of psychic energy to activities of positive and meaningful value (Aziz, 2020). Thus, da'wah not only functions as a normative message delivery, but also as a means of psychological healing (healing da'wah).

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Relation of Objects, Fathers, and Divine Representations

In the perspective of object relations, the loss of a father affects the formation of an individual's internal representation of protective and authority figures. Research by Maulana (2019) shows that individuals who grow up without a father figure tend to have fragile relational representations, characterized by emotional dependence or avoidance of closeness. This has an impact on an individual's social and spiritual relationships, including a relationship with God.

The psychology of da'wah views that human relationships with God are often influenced by the initial relationship with the figure of parents. Individuals with the experience of losing a father may have difficulty interpreting the concepts of divine compassion and protection. Therefore, the da'wah approach that emphasizes God's grace, acceptance, and presence as a figure who does not abandon His servants is very relevant (Zainuddin, 2022).

Insecure Attachment and the Implications of Family Da'wah

Several Indonesian journal articles show that losing the role of the father correlates with an insecure attachment pattern. Research by Putri and Lestari (2021) found that adolescents with absent fathers tended to have anxious or avoidant attachments, which had an impact on low self-confidence and the quality of interpersonal relationships. This pattern also affects the involvement of individuals in religious activities and da'wah communities.

In the context of family da'wah, this condition demands a non-judgmental and more dialogical approach. Da'wah needs to function as a secure base that allows individuals to restore trust and social connection. This is in line with the concept of da'wah bil hal and da'wah bil hikmah which emphasizes an empathetic and contextual approach (Anwar, 2018).

Repetition Compulsion and Islamic Parenting Patterns

The results of the study show that the trauma of losing a father also affects the parenting patterns of individuals in adulthood. Several Indonesian studies have noted the tendency of hyperprotective parenting in individuals who have lost their fathers since childhood (Kurniawan & Salim, 2020). In the perspective of psychoanalysis, this pattern is understood as a form of repetition compulsion and emotional compensation.

However, the psychology of da'wah views that religious awareness and Islamic parenting learning can help individuals break the chain of intergenerational trauma. Parenting education based on Islamic values such as tawakal, compassion, and responsibility can function as a psychological and spiritual recovery mechanism (Rahman, 2023).

Synthesis of Da'wah Psychology and Psychoanalysis

Overall, these results and discussion suggest that the loss of the role of the father since childhood is a complex psychological phenomenon that requires a multidimensional approach. Psychoanalysis provides a framework for understanding trauma dynamics and self-defense mechanisms, while da'wah psychology offers a transformative approach through the internalization of spiritual values, empathy, and relational healing. The integration of these two perspectives is important to build a da'wah model that is not only normative, but also therapeutic and humanistic.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of literature review and discussion from a psychoanalytic perspective, it can be concluded that the loss of the role of the father since childhood is a traumatic experience that has a long-term impact on personality development, emotional regulation, and the pattern of individual interpersonal relationships until adulthood. In the framework of psychoanalysis, the absence of the father figure has the potential to interfere with the formation of ego and superego structures, so that individuals are more susceptible to experiencing basic anxiety, intrapsychic conflicts, and emotional instability stored in the subconscious.

The trauma of loss encourages individuals to develop various self-defense mechanisms such as repression, denial, displacement, and projection as an unconscious effort to protect the ego from anxiety and a sense of loss. Although self-defense mechanisms are adaptive in the short term, excessive use can form maladaptive patterns of interpersonal relationships and affect the quality of individual social and

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emotional relationships in adulthood. In addition, the loss of the role of the father is also closely related to attachment pattern disorders, which are characterized by a tendency for insecure attachment, both in the form of excessive anxiety and emotional avoidance.

Furthermore, this study shows that the trauma of losing a father does not stop at individual experiences, but has the potential to be transmitted intergenerationally through parenting patterns. Individuals who experience loss of paternity role since childhood tend to develop hyperprotective parenting patterns or excessive emotional control as a form of compensation and unconscious attempts to prevent the recurrence of traumatic experiences in their children. This phenomenon can be understood in a psychoanalytic perspective as a manifestation of repetition compulsion, sublimation, and emotional compensation.

Nevertheless, losing the role of the father from childhood is not deterministic. With reflective awareness, adequate relational support, psychodynamic interventions, parenting learning, and a spiritual approach that helps individuals come to terms with the past and forgive the father figure, individuals have a great opportunity to break the chain of intergenerational trauma. Therefore, a psychoanalytic understanding of the experience of losing a father figure becomes important not only in the academic realm, but also in the practice of counseling, psychotherapy, and the development of parenting programs oriented towards trauma recovery and long-term mental health.

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