

THE PROCESS OF RECONCILING WITH SELF: AN EXPLORATION OF THE GRIEVING PROCESS AND SOCIAL SUPPORT IN PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS

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Abstract. This study aims to: (1) find out how a child responds when facing the death of his parents, (2) the role of support from surrounding people in helping to get through the grieving period and (3) find out what changes occur in participants after going through the grieving process. This research is a qualitative research. The subjects of this study were Psychology students at Nusa Cendana University with an age range of 18-19 years who had lost one of their parents. Data were obtained through the interview method which was then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to identify the main themes that emerged in students' experiences in the process of dealing with the loss of parents. The results of the study based on interviews with five participants, found that the five participants experienced a grieving process that included three main stages, namely the Initial Response Stage, Intermediate Stage, and Recovery Stage. The study also showed that the participants' grieving process was multidimensional and that social support was an important aspect in helping them come to terms with the loss.

Keywords: Grieving Process, Social Support

INTRODUCTION

Separation due to death is a very difficult situation for a person and is an inevitable part of the human life experience. In addition, many bereaved people are unprepared for the separation. The process of anxiety, as an emotional response to the loss, often has a significant impact on an individual's psychological well-being. Grief due to death usually does not end after the funeral process, rather it is after the funeral process is completed that the sense of loss begins to be felt. Feelings of sadness or grief are part of all major life changes, transitions and crises.

College students, including those studying psychology, are not exempt from gloomy experiences. However, as a group facing multiple academic pressures, developmental demands, and transitions to adulthood, students often experience unique challenges in managing their grief process. It is a fact that psychology students are often expected to have a better understanding of emotions and coping mechanisms due to their academic background. This expectation sometimes creates additional pressure, making them feel that they should be able to manage emotions better than students from other disciplines.

Loss due to the death of a loved one is a condition that involves feelings of grief in each individual, the tasks that must be completed in the grieving process include: accepting the condition of loss, processing the pain felt due to loss, adjusting to life without the deceased, and being able to start a new life (Fauziah, 2022).

According to Glick, et al (in Syifa, et al, 2022) divides the stages of grief into three stages, namely: 1) The initial response stage, is the stage that begins when the death event occurs and at the time of the funeral and other rituals in releasing the death of a loved one. Initial reactions to death at this stage include shock and experiencing feelings of disbelief; 2) Intermediate stage, which is a continuation of some of the conditions in the previous stage. Anger, guilt, longing and loneliness are common emotions at this stage; and 3) The recovery stage, at this stage the person

left behind begins to see the future and can even start a new relationship. The behaviors that arise are being able to acknowledge the loss that occurred, trying to go through emotional turmoil, adjusting to the environment without the presence of the person who is gone & releasing ties with the person who is gone.

Previous studies that are in line with this research were taken by the author, namely first, research by Elvaretta, et al on the Overview of the Grief Process in Early Adult Women Due to the Death of a Father. This study showed that participants, namely early adult women who lost their fathers, experienced the same grieving process, namely the initial response stage (denial), intermediate stage, and recovery stage (acceptance). However, in each process, subjects have different conditions in responding to grief events.

In the initial response stage, the subject experienced shock and disbelief over the death that occurred. The subject also felt deep sadness, which was characterized by crying for a long period. At the intermediate stage, the subject feels loss, regret and deep longing and has a desire to meet his father again. While at the recovery stage, the subject began to learn to accept the father's departure even though he sometimes found it difficult to rise from grief after grieving at a certain moment (Elvaretta, et al, 2022).

The second research from Fitria, et al's research on the grieving process in adolescents due to the sudden death of parents. This study refers to the theory of the stages of grief proposed by Kübler- Ross (1969) which was later developed by Glick, et al. (in Lemme, 1995) into three stages, namely the initial response stage, the intermediate stage, and the recovery stage. This study found that the grief experienced by the two subjects did not differ much. The process of grief development that the subject experienced has been passed well starting from the initial response, intermediate, and recovery, but in the last development process, namely recovery, one of the subjects has not fully passed. The main factor causing grief in adolescents is attachment. The more the teenager has a strong attachment to the deceased, the longer and deeper the grief experienced by the teenager (Fitria, et al, 2013).

Third, the next research is entitled The Use of the Main Character's Point of View to Represent Kubler Ross' Five Stages Of Grief Theory in Writing the Screenplay of the Film "Senandika Lara" by Nusi Wiandri. This research applies the Kubler-Ross Theory, with 5 stages of grief in the screenplay of "Senandika Lara", which provides an in-depth description of the main character's emotional journey in dealing with the loss of her father. From initial denial, anger, bargaining, depression to final acceptance. The main character goes through complex and emotionally evocative stages, reflecting the complexity and challenges of the grieving process (Nusi Wiandri, S., 2022).

Grief, as a response to loss, includes a range of psychological states and physiological symptoms that develop over time (Shear in Renata, et al., 2022). The intensity of grief symptoms will generally decrease over time however, not everyone experiences this. Some people experience long-term reactions to the symptoms of grief experienced (Shear in Renata, et al, 2022). Complex grief according to Shear (in Renata, et al, 2022) is a condition of the normal healing process that is inhibited by complex thoughts or behaviors.

Social Support

The death of a loved one is a painful and grief-filled experience. The grieving process is a natural response to loss, but not everyone gets through this period easily. Social support plays an important role in helping individuals get through grief and restore their emotional well-being.

Social support refers to the presence of certain individuals who sincerely provide advice, motivate, direct, and strengthen a person when facing problems and challenges in carrying out activities in a directed manner to achieve goals (Bastaman in Tentama, 2014). The impact of social support is very significant on one's survival. Social support can be obtained from various sources such as friends, family, friends, teachers, psychologists, neighbors or others.

As for the aspects of social support according to (Cutrona & Gardner in Sarafino, 2011) in (Dianto, 2017) there are five forms of social support, namely: emotional support (which provides a sense of being listened to, attention, and trust), appreciation support (which includes assessment, reinforcement, and positive feedback), information support (which provides knowledge, advice, and suggestions), instrumental support (in the form of means that help

individuals through time, money, tools, assistance, and energy), and group support (which involves involvement and recognition as part of a community that shares the same interests and social activities).

Referring to previous research, the researchers wanted to examine the objectives of the formulation of this research problem, namely to find out how a person responds when facing the death of his parents, the role of support from surrounding people in helping to get through the grieving period and want to know what changes occur in participants after going through the grieving process. The grieving stage of each phase of grief experienced by individuals is based on Glick's grief theory, et al. Researchers are interested in this research topic because the phenomenon of losing family members, especially parents, is one of the most concerning phenomena and will not be forgotten. This raises the researcher's curiosity about the psychological state of different individuals in going through the grief phase.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with interview method. The research was conducted at the Psychology Study Program, Nusa Cendana University. The subjects of this study were psychology students with an age range of 18-19 years who had lost one of their parents, including 3 students who lost their mothers and 2 people who lost their fathers. The instrument used in this research is a voice recording which is converted into verbatim interview transcripts, where the data obtained is then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to identify the main themes that arise in the experience of adolescents in the process of dealing with parental loss.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

1.1 Grieving Process

The results of interviews conducted by researchers found that there was a grieving process experienced by 5 participants with the theory of grieving from Glick, et al. This theory explains that the grieving process is not only about sadness, but also about how a person adapts to loss and rebuilds his life. This theory emphasizes three main stages, namely the Initial Response Stage, Intermediate Stage, and Recovery Stage. It can be seen that all participants experienced all three stages of grief, although with varying intensity and duration.

a) *Initial Response Stage*

In the first stage, participants 1, 3 and 4 experienced shock and denial, not believing the death of their parents. Participant 2, although still a child, showed sadness and disappointment, but did not experience strong denial. Participant 5, felt confused, shocked and sad. He also experienced denial and wondered why his mother had to die.

b) *Intermediate Stage*

In the second stage, participant 1 felt longing, anger, fear, disappointment and guilt because he felt he had caused his mother to die. Similar to participant 1, participant 2 also felt disappointed and afraid. Participant 3, felt afraid of losing a protector, he also found it difficult to accept the reality of loss and felt sadness, anger, and disappointment. Participant 4 felt sad, angry, and anxious, especially about her and her sister's school fees. Similar to Participant 1, Participant 5 also blamed herself for her mother's death. He also lost his way and had thoughts of suicide. At this stage, all participants also felt anxiety about their future without one of their parents.

c) *Recovery Stage*

In the third stage, participant 1 began to rebuild his life and learn to be more mature and independent. Participant 2 began to rebuild his life and find new meaning in life. He learned to accept the reality of loss and found support from his friends. Participant 3 started to rebuild his life, he also learned to be more mature and responsible although he also became insecure and inferior to the people around him. Participant 4 did not take long to accept the reality of his

father's death, he learned to be closer to his mother and sister. Participant 5 is more accepting of reality and also has an idea for his future.

1.2 Social Support

From the interviews with the participants, it appears that the people around them play an important role in the recovery of their grieving process. Here are some of the roles that emerged:

a) *Family*

Family provided very important emotional support for the participants. They provided a sense of security and understanding. For example, Participant 1 found it helpful that his family was always by his side, Participant 2 felt grateful for having a father, family, and cousins who loved him very much, although sometimes he also felt a lack of support but tried to make up for it. Participant 3 felt helped because her family was always beside her, and participant 4 who always poured out her feelings to her mother and sister, and who strengthened each other. Families also provide spiritual support. For example, participant 4 felt helped because her mother always reminded her not to give up hope and participant 5 who also received a lot of support from her family.

b) *Friends*

Friends also provide important emotional support, such as listening to complaints, providing encouragement, and accompanying when sad. For example, participant 1 felt helped because she had friends who always asked how she was doing, participant 2 felt helped because she had a best friend from childhood who she always confided in, and participant 4 felt helped because her friends came to mourn and provide comfort.

Friends also provide practical support, such as helping with school matters, making donations, and providing other assistance. For example, participant 4 felt helped because his friends at school made donations, and participant 5, who although chose not to share his sadness with his friends, felt helped because his friends always helped him.

c) *Community*

In the interview results, communities such as churches, provide spiritual support, such as providing prayers and encouragement. For example, participant 2 felt helped because the church community always provided support and participant 5 who received support from his community and was able to return to prayer and felt God was always beside him.

d) *Professional (Psychologist, Psychiatrist, etc.)*

Although the five participants never received professional help in overcoming grief as a result of the grieving process, some participants felt the need to get professional support, such as psychologists. For example, participant 3 felt the need to get professional help because he felt that he was harboring a lot of sadness.

e) *Other social support*

There was also other social support received by the participants, such as neighbors, parents' co-workers, and girlfriends. For example, Participant 4 received emotional support from his neighbors and his father's coworkers who came to mourn and provided emotional support by showing sympathy and empathy to Participant 4 and his family. For participant 3, he tends to avoid sharing his complaints with his friends, he prefers to talk to his girlfriend.

1.3 Changes In Attitude And Behavior After Going Through The Grieving Process

a) *Independence and Maturity*

Some participants showed changes in becoming more independent and mature. For example, participants 1 and 5 felt that the loss forced them to become more mature and learn to take care of household needs, manage finances, or help the remaining family. They also realized the importance of their role in the family, such as taking responsibility for replacing the role of the missing parent.

b) *Social Interaction Patterns*

Some become more introverted and choose to keep their feelings to themselves and are uncomfortable talking to others. On the other hand, some are closer to family or friends for emotional support such as participants 2 and 4.

c) *Confidence and Insecurity*

Participant 3 revealed that the loss made him feel more inferior and less confident in interacting with the surrounding environment.

This research focuses more on how changes in attitudes and behaviors experienced by participants after experiencing the grieving process or when they begin to accept the reality of their parents' death.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that the grieving process experienced by the five participants followed the stages described in the theory of grief by Glick, et al, namely the Initial Response Stage, Intermediate Stage, and Recovery Stage. All participants experienced these three stages, although with different intensity and duration. In the initial stage, participants experienced various emotional reactions such as shock, denial, sadness, and confusion. In the intermediate stage, they felt more complex feelings such as longing, anger, disappointment, and guilt. The recovery stage shows that participants begin to rebuild their lives and find new meaning after experiencing loss.

Social support from those around them, including family, friends, community and professionals, played a crucial role in their recovery process. Family provided crucial emotional and spiritual support, while friends helped with emotional and practical support. The community also played a role in providing spiritual support, and although none of the participants received professional help, some felt the need for such support.

This study also showed that the death of a parent can trigger significant changes in an individual's attitudes and behaviors that spur them to re-adapt to the environment despite both positive and negative changes.

Overall, this study shows that the grieving process is a complex and individualized journey, where social support plays a vital role in helping individuals cope with loss and rebuild their lives. This research can serve as a reference for those involved in supporting bereaved individuals, as well as highlighting the importance of understanding the grieving process in a social context.

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